

Kenya

For a country of its size, Kenya sure packs a lot in: mountains and deserts, colourful tribal culture, beaches and coral reefs, and some of Africa's best wildlife attractions. In fact, to say Kenya is Africa in microcosm would not be stretching the point. There are a million different reasons to come here, and picking just one is nigh impossible. Stunning landscapes set the scene, from Kakamega's rainforests to Indian Ocean beaches by way of towering Mt Kenya; the rolling grasslands of the Masai Mara to searing deserts on the shores of the Jade Sea; and the Great Rift Valley cleaving a massive gash through it all.

Wildlife safaris have been the mainstay of Kenya's tourism for decades, and several Kenyan parks are among the best places in Africa to see lions, elephants, leopards and the famous wildebeest migration. Kenya rates as one of the top five bird-watching destinations in the world, and other activities for outdoor enthusiasts include trekking the glacial ridges of Mt Kenya, ballooning over the Masai Mara, snorkelling at Malindi Marine National Park on the Indian Ocean coast, and much more besides.

The people, too, represent a wide cross-section of everything that is contemporary Africa, and everyday life brings together traditional tribes and urban families; ancient customs and modern sensibilities. Swapping the latest political gossip with the switched-on locals is just one more small pleasure that comes with the culture.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 583,000 sq km
- **Budget** About US\$75 a day, although one quality safari could blow it sky-high.
- **Borders** Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda
- **Capital** Nairobi
- **Languages** Kiswahili, English, tribal languages
- **Money** Kenya Shilling (KSh); US\$1 = KSh70
- **Population** 31.6 million
- **Seasons** Rainy (March to May, October to December), dry (January to February, June to September)
- **Telephone** Country code 254; international code 00
- **Time** GMT/UTC +3
- **Visa** All visitors need a visa



HIGHLIGHTS

- **Masai Mara National Reserve** (p700) Traverse expansive savannah for unmatched wildlife and the world's biggest traffic jam – the wildebeest migration.
- **Mount Kenya National Park** (p694) Trek to jagged peaks and equatorial glaciers that would make Kilimanjaro green with envy.
- **Lamu** (p705) Immerse yourself in Swahili culture, from Lamu's winding coral streets to the empty beaches of Kiwayu.
- **Kakamega Forest Reserve** (p699) Watch out for amazing birdlife and primates in Kenya's largest remaining tract of Congo rainforest.
- **Loyangalani** (p698) Cool off in the sublime jade waters of Lake Turkana among unforgettable, colourful tribespeople.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

The weather is generally considered to be best in January and February, when it's hot and dry, with high concentrations of wildlife. However, the parks get crowded and rates for accommodation go through the roof. Avoid Christmas and Easter unless you want to pay a fortune.

June to October is generally still dry and during this period the annual wildebeest migration takes place.

During the long rains (from March to the end of May, the low season) things are much quieter, and you can get some good deals; this is also true during the short rains from October to December.

ITINERARIES

- **One Week** Arrange things in advance so you can head out on safari straight after landing in Nairobi. Take in the Masai Mara National Reserve (p700) for at least three days; most trips also include Lake Nakuru National Park (p693) en route. Spend half a day back in Nairobi (p684) then fly down to the coast. Spend the rest of the week soaking up the atmosphere in the crumbling Swahili ruins of Mombasa (p700), lying on tropical beaches and/or snorkelling at Watamu (p704) or Malindi (p703).
- **Two Weeks** To make the most of the beach and the bush, extend your stay in the southern parks – spend a few extra days to really enjoy the Masai Mara National Re-

HOW MUCH?

- **Local matatu (minibus transport) ride** US\$0.40
- **Plate of stew/biryani/pilau** US\$1.80
- **Large juice** US\$0.90
- **Pair of kargas** US\$5
- **Taxi home** US\$6

LONELY PLANET INDEX

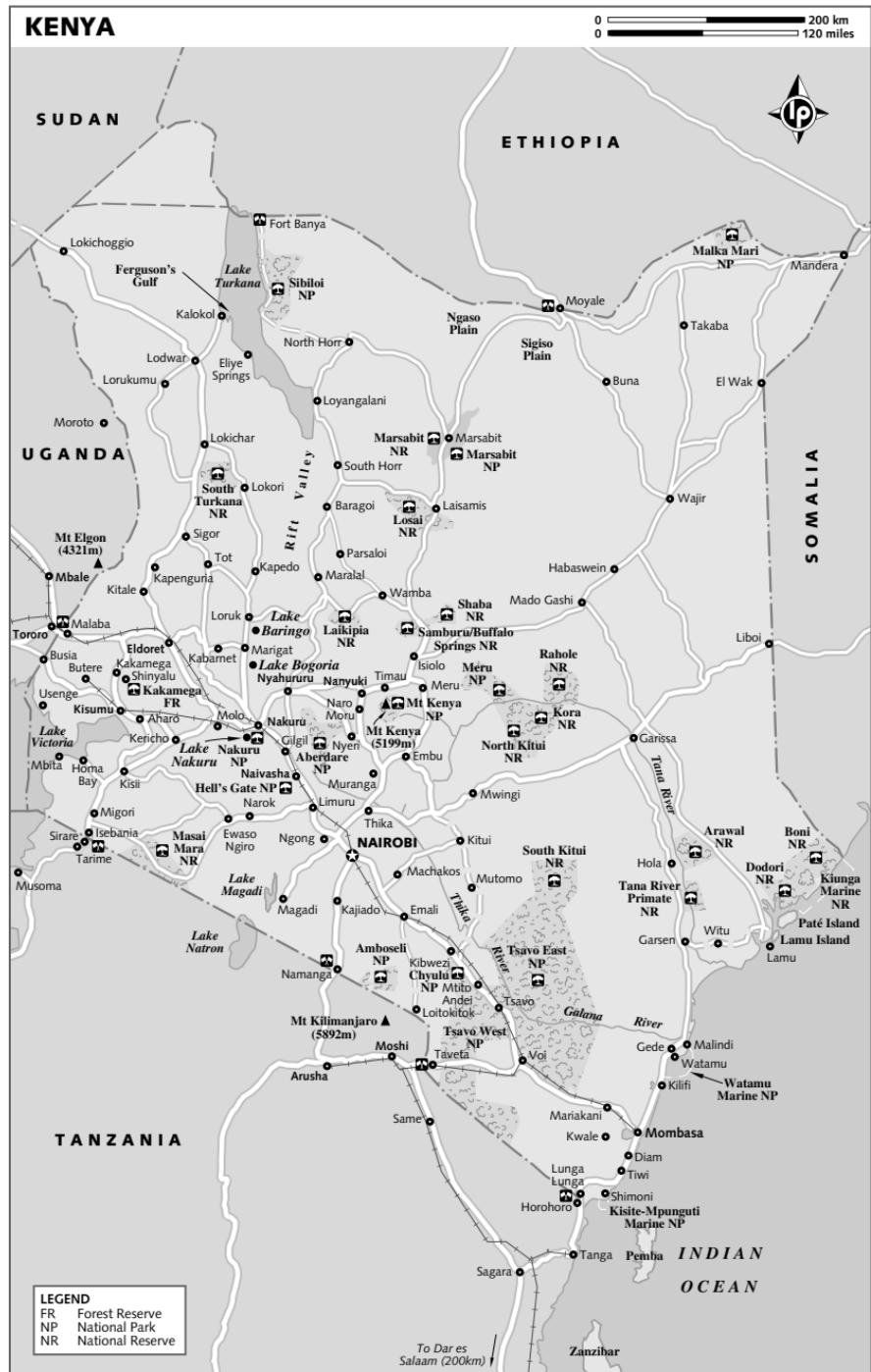
- **1L petrol** US\$1
- **1L bottled water** US\$0.80
- **Bottle of Tusker** US\$1.20
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$12
- **Sambusa** US\$0.15

serve (p700) and Lake Nakuru National Park (p693), head up to Lake Baringo (p694) then spend a few days trekking on mighty Mt Kenya (p694). Spend the last few days relaxing on Tiwi Beach (p703) or working your way up the coast from Mombasa (p700) to Malindi (p703). Alternatively, spend the second week heading overland to the searing desert and colourful tribespeople at Lake Turkana (p698).

- **One Month** Any or all of the above trips can be combined in a month, allowing a bit of time to linger among, say, the Turkana people around Loyangalani (p698), the Samburu at Isiolo (p697) and, of course, the Maasai (p700). Other possibilities include Kakamega (p699) for a taste of Kenya's rainforests as they once were; Lake Baringo (p694) for exceptional birding; Tsavo National Park (p707) for a real off-the-beaten-track safari; and scenic Amboseli (p708) for dreamy sundowners under Mt Kilimanjaro.

HISTORY

The patchwork of ethnic groups, each with their own culture and language, which today exist side by side in modern Kenya are the result of the waves of migration, some from as early as 2000 BC, from every corner of Africa – Turkanas from Ethiopia; Kikuyu, Akamba and Meru from West Africa; and the Maasai, Luo and Samburu from the southern part of Sudan. Kenya, however, was occupied long



before this: archaeological excavations around Lake Turkana in the 1970s revealed skulls thought to be around two million years old and those of the earliest human beings ever discovered.

By around the 8th century Arabic, Indian, Persian and even Chinese merchants were arriving on the Kenyan coast, intent on trading skins, ivory, gold and spices. These new arrivals helped set up a string of commercial cities along the whole of the East African coast, intermarrying with local dynasties to found a prosperous new civilisation, part African, part Arabic, known as the Swahili.

By the 16th century, Europeans too had cottoned on to the potential of the East African coast, and most of the Swahili trading towns, including Mombasa and Lamu, were either sacked or occupied by the Portuguese. Two centuries of harsh military rule followed, punctuated by regular battles for control of the former Swahili empire. The Omani Arabs finally ousted the Portuguese in 1720, but it wasn't long before the coast came into the control of more European colonisers – the British, who used their battleships to protect their lucrative route to India and to suppress the hated slave trade.

Mau Mau Rebellion

Despite plenty of overt pressure on Kenya's colonial authorities, the real independence movement was underground. Groups from the Kikuyu, Maasai and Luo tribes vowed to kill Europeans and their African collaborators. The most famous of these movements was Mau Mau, formed in 1952 by the Kikuyu people, which aimed to drive the white settlers from Kenya forever. In true African fashion, the Mau Mau rebellion was a brutal war of attrition on white people, property and 'collaborators'. The various Mau Mau sects came together under the umbrella of the Kenya Land Freedom Army, led by Dedan Kimathi, and staged frequent attacks against white farms and government outposts. By the time the rebels were defeated in 1956, the death toll stood at over 13,500 Africans (guerrillas, civilians and troops) and just over 100 Europeans.

In 1960 the British government officially announced their plan to transfer power to a democratically elected African government. Independence was scheduled for December 1963, accompanied by grants and loans of

US\$100 million to enable the Kenyan assembly to buy out European farmers in the highlands and restore the land to the tribes.

The run-up to independence, scheduled for 1963, was surprisingly smooth, although the redistribution of land wasn't a great success. The immediate effect was to cause a significant decline in agricultural production, from which Kenya has never quite recovered.

Jomo Kenyatta became Kenya's first president on 12 December, ruling until his death in 1978. Under Kenyatta's presidency, Kenya developed into one of Africa's most stable and prosperous nations. But while Kenyatta is still seen as a success story, he was excessively biased in favour of his own tribe and became paranoid about dissent. Opponents of his regime who became too vocal for comfort frequently 'disappeared', and corruption soon became endemic at all levels of the power structure.

The 1980s & '90s

Kenyatta was succeeded in 1978 by his vice president, Daniel arap Moi, a Kalenjin who became one of the most enduring 'Big Men' in Africa, ruling in virtual autocracy for nearly 25 years. In the process, he accrued an incredible personal fortune; today many believe him to be the richest man in Africa. Moi's regime was also characterised by nepotism, corruption, arrests of dissidents, censorship, the disbanding of tribal societies and the closure of universities.

Faced with a foreign debt of nearly US\$9 billion and blanket suspension of foreign aid, Moi was pressured into holding multiparty elections in early 1992. Independent observers reported a litany of electoral inconsistencies; and about 2000 people were killed during ethnic clashes, widely believed to have been triggered by KANU agitation. Nonetheless, Moi was overwhelmingly re-elected.

Preoccupied with internal problems, Kenya was quite unprepared for the events of 7 August 1998. Early in the morning massive blasts simultaneously ripped apart the American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, killing more than 200 people. The effect on Kenyan tourism, and the economy as a whole, was devastating.

Further terrorist activity shook the country on 28 November 2002, when suicide bombers slammed an explosives-laden car into the lobby of the Paradise Hotel at Kikambala,

near Mombasa. Moments before, missiles were fired at an Israeli passenger plane taking off from Mombasa's airport. Al-Qaeda subsequently claimed responsibility for both acts.

Kenya Today

To the relief of many, in 2002 Moi announced his intention to retire. He put his weight firmly behind Uhuru Kenyatta, the son of Jomo Kenyatta, as his successor. Meanwhile, 12 opposition parties and several religious groups united under the umbrella of the National Alliance Party of Kenya (NAK), later known as the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC). Presidential candidate Mwai Kibaki was the former head of the Democratic party.

Although initially dogged by infighting, within weeks the opposition transformed itself into a dynamic and unified political party. When the election came on 27 December 2002 it was peaceful and fair and the result was dramatic – a landslide two-thirds majority for Mwai Kibaki and NARC. Kibaki was inaugurated as Kenya's third president on 30 December 2002.

The new regime has been plagued by a constant stream of party infighting, corruption and economic problems. The path to reform has been slower and more tortuous than many people had hoped, although some progress has been made, such as new *matatu* (minibus transport) regulations. However, security and corruption remain worrying issues, locals complain that the cost of living has virtually doubled, and Kenya has fallen 20 places on the UN Human Development Index since 2002.

With elections due once again in 2007, an energetic Uhuru Kenyatta at the head of the newly regrouped KANU, and an ambitious bid for the 2016 Olympic Games attracting international attention, the next few years will be an interesting time in Kenyan politics, and Kibaki certainly has plenty of challenges still to come.

CULTURE

Many residents of Kenya are more aware of their tribal affiliation than of being 'Kenyan'; this lack of national cohesion undoubtedly holds the country back, but is generally accompanied by an admirable live-and-let-live attitude. In fact, Kenyans generally approach life with great exuberance: on a crowded

matatu, in a buzzing marketplace, or enjoying a drink in a bar, they are quick to laugh and are never reluctant to offer a smile.

Education is of primary concern to Kenyans. Literacy rates are around 85% and are considerably higher than in any of the neighbouring countries. Although education isn't compulsory, the motivation to learn is huge, particularly now that it's free, and you'll see children in school uniform everywhere in Kenya, even in the most impoverished rural communities.

Kenyans are generally quite conservative, and are particularly concerned with modesty in dress. T-shirts and shorts are almost unheard of, and shirts are an obsession for Kenyan men and almost everyone wears one, often with a sweater or blazer.

Tribe may be important in Kenya, but family is paramount. Particularly as the pace and demands of modern life grow, the role of the extended family has become even more important. It is not unusual to encounter Kenyan children who are living with aunts, uncles or grandparents in a regional town, while their parents are working in Nairobi or at a resort in Watamu. The separation that brings about such circumstances in the first place is, without exception, a result of parents' desires to further opportunities for their families and their children.

Life is generally played out in the streets and communal places. And even as urbanisation happens and traditional community structures are fractured, street life remains lively.

For all this, as Kenya gains a foothold in the 21st century it is grappling with ever-increasing poverty. Once categorised as a middle-income country, Kenya has fallen to a low-income country, with the standard of living dropping drastically from 2002 to 2005.

PEOPLE

Kenya's population in 2001 was estimated at 30,765,900. The population-growth rate, currently at around 2.6%, has slowed in the last few years due to the soaring incidence of HIV/AIDS, which now infects 15% of adults.

According to 2001 UN figures, life expectancy in Kenya is 52 years, although some sources place it as low as 47, due to the effects of HIV/AIDS. Only 42% of the population has access to clean drinking water, but 87% are now thought to have access to adequate

sanitation. The infant-mortality rate is 65 per 1000 births (a marked increase on the 1997 figure) and 51% of the population is aged under 18. A sign of growing poverty in rural regions is migration to urban areas, where 33% of all Kenyans now live, many of them in squalid shanty towns.

Most Kenyans outside the coastal and eastern provinces are Christians of one sort or another, while most of those on the coast and in the eastern part of the country are Muslim. Muslims make up some 30% of the population. In the more remote tribal areas you'll find a mixture of Muslims, Christians and those who follow their ancestral tribal beliefs, though this last group is definitely a minority.

ARTS

Benga is the country's contemporary dance music, characterised by electric-guitar licks and bounding bass rhythms. Well-known exponents include DO Misiani and his group Shirati Jazz, and you should also look out for Globestyle, Victoria Kings and Ambira Boys.

Popular bands today are heavily influenced by *benga*, *soukous* and Western music, with lyrics often in Swahili. These include bands such as Them Mushrooms (now reinvented as Uyoya) and Safari Sound. For upbeat dance tunes, Nameless, Ogopa DJs and Deux Vultures are recommended acts.

Local stars of American-influenced hip-hop include Necessary Noize, Nonini, Emmanuel Jal, the Homeboyz DJs and the Nairobi Yetu collective.

Two of Kenya's best authors are Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Meja Mwangi. Ngugi's harrowing criticism of the Kenyan establishment landed him in jail for a year (described in his *Detained – A Prison Writer's Diary*). Meja Mwangi sticks more to social issues, but has a brilliant sense of humour that threads its way right through his books, including his latest, *The Mzungu Boy*.

Kenya's rising star is Binyavanga Wainaina, currently a writer for the South African *Sunday Times* newspaper, who won the Caine Prize for African Writing in July 2002. Marjorie Oludhe Magoye's *The Present Moment* follows the life stories of a group of elderly women in a Christian refuge. For more writing by women in Africa, try *Unwinding Threads*, a collection of short stories by many authors from all over the continent.

ENVIRONMENT

Kenya straddles the equator and covers an area of some 583,000 sq km, including around 13,600 sq km of Lake Victoria. The modern landscape was shaped by the Rift Valley, a gigantic crack in the earth's crust that runs from Lake Turkana to the Tanzania border; and the activity of titanic (but now extinct) volcanoes such as Mts Kenya, Elgon and Kilimanjaro (across the border in Tanzania). The Rift Valley floor features numerous 'soda' lakes, rich in sodium bicarbonate, created by the filtering of water through mineral-rich volcanic rock and subsequent evaporation. Volcanic activity can still be seen in places like Hell's Gate National Park (p693) and Mt Kenya (p694), once Africa's highest mountain at 5199m. The Rift Valley divides the flat plains of the coast from the hills along Lake Victoria's shore.

Around 10% of Kenya's land area is protected by law, and the national parks and reserves here rate among the best in Africa. More popular parks, such as the Masai Mara National Reserve (p700) and Amboseli National Park (p708), can become overcrowded in the high season (January to February). A number of marine national parks have also been established, providing excellent diving and snorkelling.

No trip to Kenya would be complete without going on safari, and Kenya is a virtual microcosm of African environments and its biodiversity is extraordinary for the country's size. Iconic species such as lions, elephants, leopards and buffaloes are generally easy to see, but the biggest spectacle is the annual wildebeest migration that spills over from Tanzania's Serengeti Plains each year. Rhinos are very rare in Kenya, owing to a massive poaching problem.

The variety of birds is extraordinary – some 1200 species – and a trip to Kenya has turned many a casual observer into a dedicated birder. Major reserves often support hundreds of bird species; interesting species include ostriches, vultures, colourful starlings and marabou storks. Wetlands support abundant flamingos, herons and pelicans, while the forests are home to hornbills, touracos, sunbirds, weavers and a host more.

Forest destruction continues on a large scale in Kenya – less than 3% of the country's original forest remains. Land grabbing, illegal logging, charcoal burning and agricultural

encroachment all take their toll. The degazetting of protected forests is another contentious issue, sparking widespread protests and preservation campaigns.

The main cause of this is untrammelled population growth; Kenya's population has doubled in the past 20 years and, not surprisingly, the land area hasn't. The not unexpected corollaries are a vicious cycle of deforestation, land degradation and erosion, causing people to open up and destroy still more land.

Renewed poaching raids on elephants and rhinos have led to talk of abandoning some of the more remote parks and concentrating resources where they can achieve the best results. At the same time, community conservation projects are being encouraged, and many community-owned ranches are now being opened up as private wildlife reserves.

An increasing number of important wildlife conservation areas now exist on private land. Supporting these projects is a great way

for travellers to directly contribute to local communities as well as assist Kenyan wildlife preservation.

FOOD & DRINK

Food isn't one of Kenya's highlights, and the best dining is usually in upmarket hotels or safari lodges. The one local speciality is *nyama choma*, which is technically barbecued meat. You buy the meat (usually goat) by the kilogram; it's cooked over a charcoal pit and served in bite-sized pieces with a vegetable side dish.

Kenya grows some of the finest tea and coffee in the world, but getting a decent cup of either can be difficult. Chai is drunk in large quantities, but the tea, milk and sugar are usually boiled together and stewed for ages. In Nairobi there are a handful of excellent coffeehouses, and you can usually get good filter coffee at any of the big hotels. Soft drinks are available everywhere under the generic term of sodas.

NATIONAL PARK FEES

Park entry fees in Kenya are being converted to 'smartcard', which must be charged with credit in advance and can only be topped up at certain locations; they remain the property of the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and must be surrendered once they run out of credit. Any credit left once you finish your trip cannot be refunded.

At the time of research the smartcard system was in use at Nairobi, Lake Nakuru, Aberdare, Amboseli, Tsavo East and Tsavo West National Parks. Other parks still work on a cash system. You can purchase and charge smartcards at the KWS headquarters in Nairobi and Mombasa, at Aberdare headquarters, at Lake Nakuru main gate, at Voi gate in Tsavo East, and at the Malindi Marine National Park office.

Entry fees to the parks per person are as follows:

Parks (category)	Entry adult/child US\$	Camping adult/child US\$
Aberdare, Amboseli, Lake Nakuru (A)	30/10	10/5
Tsavo East & West (B)	27/10	10/5
Nairobi (C)	23/10	10/5
all other parks (D)	15/5	8/5
marine parks	5/2	-

The land-based parks and reserves charge KSh200 for vehicles with fewer than six seats and KSh500 for vehicles seating six to 12. In addition to the public camping areas, special camp sites cost US\$10 to US\$15 per adult nonresident, plus a KSh5000 weekly reservation fee. Guides are available in most parks for KSh500 per day.

The Masai Mara National Reserve has the same entry fees as category A national parks; entry to Mt Kenya National Park is US\$15/8 per adult/child. Kakamega Forest Reserves is a joint KWS and Forestry Department project and charges US\$10/5 for an adult/child.

All fees cover visitors for a 24-hour period, but you can't leave and re-enter without paying twice.

The local beers are Tusker, White Cap and Pilsner (all manufactured by Kenya Breweries). Castle (a South African beer) is also made under license by Kenya Breweries. Beers are cheapest from supermarkets (KSh45 for 500ml); bars charge KSh80 to KSh200. Imported wines are available in Nairobi restaurants and in big supermarkets. *Pombe* is the local beer, usually a fermented brew made with bananas or millet and sugar. It shouldn't do you any harm.

NAIROBI

020 / pop 2.5 million

Nairobi is Kenya's biggest and baddest city, or so the rumour goes. Most visitors dive in and out in the shortest time possible, but it's easy enough to sidestep the worst of the city's dangers and, as Kenyan cities go, this one has plenty going for it: café culture and unbridled nightlife, for example; and it's virtually the only place in the country where you can get a truly varied diet.

HISTORY

When the East Africa railway arrived in the 1890s, a depot was established on the edge of a small stream known to the Maasai as *uaso nairobi* (cold water). Nairobi quickly developed into the administrative nerve centre of the Uganda Railway, and in 1901 the capital of the British Protectorate was moved here from Mombasa.

Sadly, almost all of the colonial-era buildings were replaced by bland, modern office buildings following *uhuru* (independence) in 1963.

ORIENTATION

The compact city centre is in the area bounded by Uhuru Hwy, Haile Selassie Ave, Tom Mboya St and University Way. Kenyatta Ave divides this area in two; most of the important offices lie to the south, while there are hotels, the city market and more offices to the north. Most budget accommodation is northeast of the city centre, on the far side of Tom Mboya St and around Latema, Accra and River Rds. This area has a bad reputation for robbery.

North of the city centre are the University of Nairobi, the National Museum and the expat-dominated suburb of Westlands. Jomo Kenyatta International Airport is southeast

of the central Nairobi; also south are Langata and Karen suburbs and Wilson airport.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Book Villa (Map pp688-9; ☎ 337890; Standard St) New, discounted and second-hand books.

Text Book Centre Kijabe St (Map pp686-7; ☎ 330340; Kijabe St); Westlands (Map pp686-7; ☎ 3747405; Sarit Centre, Westlands) One of the best bookshops.

Westland Sundries Bookshop (Map pp688-9; ☎ 212776; New Stanley Hotel, Kenyatta Ave)

Cultural Centres

Alliance Française (Map pp686-7; ☎ 340054; www.alliancefrnairobi.org; cnr Monrovia & Loita Sts; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-5pm Sat) An events program that showcases Kenyan and African performing arts.

British Council (Map pp686-7; ☎ 334855; www.britishcouncil.org/kenya; Upper Hill Rd; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat)

Nairobi Cultural Institute (Map pp686-7; ☎ 569205; Ngong Rd) Holds lectures and other functions of local cultural interest.

Emergency

Emergency services (☎ 999) Fire, police and ambulance. Don't rely on their prompt arrival.

Police (☎ 240000) For less-urgent police business.

Internet Access

AGX (Map pp686-7; Barclays Plaza, Loita St; per min KSh1; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat)

Capital Realtime (Map pp688-9; ☎ 247900; Lonrho House, Standard St; per min KSh2; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat)

EasySurf (Map pp686-7; ☎ 745418; Sarit Centre, Westlands; per min KSh4; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun)

Medical Services

Avoid the Kenyatta National Hospital.

AAR Health Services Nairobi (Map pp686-7; ☎ 715319; Williamson House, Fourth Ngong Ave); Westlands (Map pp686-7; ☎ 446201; Sarit Centre, Westlands)

Aga Khan Hospital (Map pp686-7; ☎ 740000; Third Parklands Ave; ☎ 24hr)

KAM Pharmacy (Map pp688-9; ☎ 251700; Executive Tower, IPS Bldg, Kimathi St) Pharmacy, doctor's surgery and laboratory.

Medical Services Surgery (Map pp688-9; ☎ 317625; Bruce House, Standard St; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

Nairobi Hospital (Map pp686-7; ☎ 722160) Off Argwings Khodek Rd.

Money

Barclays branches with guarded ATMs include those on Muindi Mbingu St (Map pp688-9), Mama Ngina St (Map pp688-9), and on the corner of Kenyatta and Moi Aves (Map pp688-9). There are branches in Westlands.

Foreign-exchange bureaus offer slightly better rates for cash.

American Express (Map pp688-9; ☎ 222906; Hilton Hotel, Mama Ngina St; ☐ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

Handles travellers cheques and looks after mail for clients.

Cosmos Forex (Map pp688-9; ☎ 250582; Rehema House, Standard St)

Goldfield Forex (Map pp688-9; ☎ 244554; Fedha Towers, Kaunda St)

Mayfair Forex (Map pp688-9; ☎ 226212; Uganda House, Standard St)

Postbank (Map pp688-9; 13 Kenyatta Ave) For Western Union money transfers.

Travellers Forex Bureau (Map pp686-7; ☎ 447204; The Mall, Westlands)

Post

The **main post office** (Map pp688-9; ☎ 243434; Kenyatta Ave; ☐ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) also has branches on Moi Ave (Map pp688-9) and Tom Mboya St (Map pp688-9) if you just want stamps.

Telephone

Telkom Kenya (Map pp688-9; ☎ 232000; Haile Selassie Ave; ☐ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Has dozens of payphones and you can buy phonecards. There's also a branch at the main post office.

Travel Agencies

Bunson Travel (Map pp688-9; ☎ 221992; www.bunsonkenya.com; Pan-African Insurance Bldg, Standard St) A good upmarket operator with offices around Africa.

Flight Centres (Map pp688-9; ☎ 210024; Lakhamshi House, Biashara St) Discounted air tickets, camping safaris and overland trips.

Let's Go Travel (www.lets-go-travel.net) Central Nairobi (Map pp688-9; ☎ 340331; Caxton House, Standard St); Westlands ☎ 447151; ABC Pl, Waiyaki Way, Westlands) Flights, safaris, car hire and pretty much anything else you might need.

Tropical Winds (Map pp686-7; ☎ 341939; www.tropical-winds.com; Barclays Plaza, Loita St) Nairobi's STA Travel representative.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

'Nairobi' as it is often called by residents, has its share of crime and violence, but the majority of problems happen in the slums, far

from the main tourist zones. The city centre is comparatively trouble-free as long as you use a bit of common sense, and there are plenty of *askaris* (security guards) around at night. Stay alert and you should encounter nothing worse than a few persistent safari touts and the odd con artist. The area around Latema and River Rds is a hotspot for petty theft, and Uhuru Park attracts all kinds of dodgy characters. The streets empty rapidly after dark – take a taxi, even if you're only going a few blocks.

SIGHTS

Kenya's grand **National Museum** (Map pp686-7; ☎ 742131; www.museums.or.ke; Museum Hill Rd; adult/child KSh200/100; ☐ 9.30am-6pm) has a good range of cultural, geological and natural-history exhibits. Volunteer guides offer tours in English, Dutch and French; a donation is appropriate. The 1st floor also hosts the excellent Gallery of Contemporary East African Art.

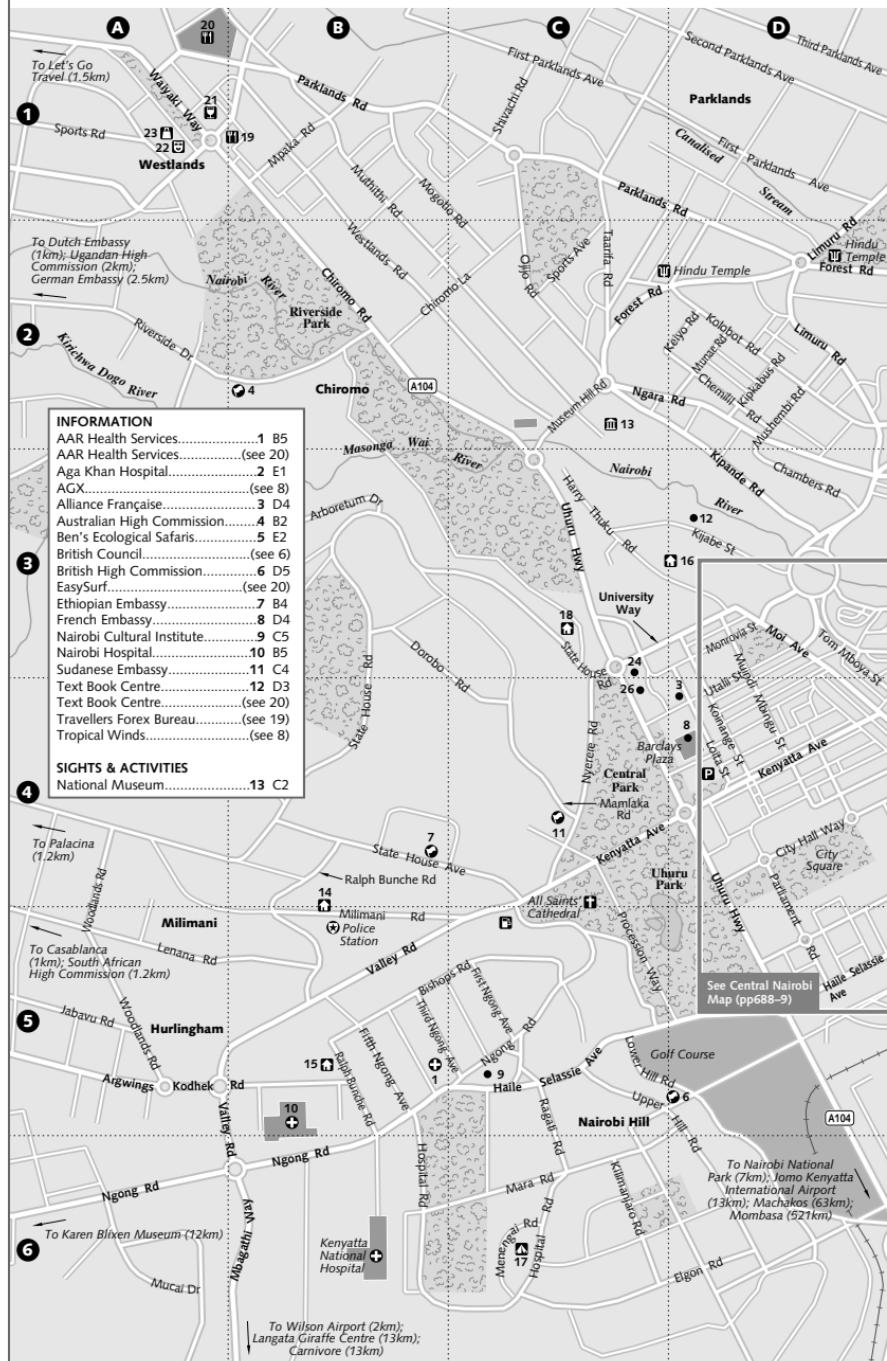
The ground-floor atrium and gallery of the **National Archives** (Map pp688-9; ☎ 749341; Moi Ave; admission free; ☐ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat) display an eclectic selection of contemporary art, historical photos of Nairobi, cultural artefacts, furniture and tribal objects.

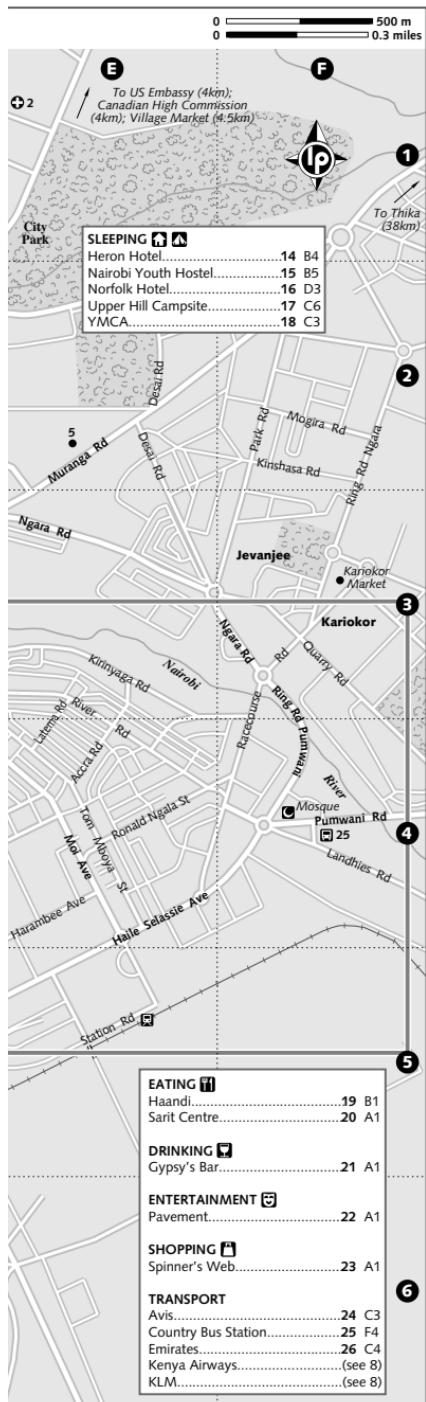
A visit to **Nairobi National Park** (nonresident adult/child US\$23/10, smartcard required), a few kilometres from the city centre, is a great way to fill in a few hours before you catch a plane. There's plentiful wildlife, including most of the plains animals (except elephants), against the bizarre backdrop of Nairobi's skyscrapers. The headquarters of the **KWS** (☎ 600800; www.kws.org) are at the main gate. The 'Park Shuttle' is a KWS bus that leaves the main gate at 3pm Sunday for a 2½-hour tour of the park. The cost is US\$20/5 per adult/child and you'll need to book in person at the main gate by 2.30pm. *Matatus* 125 and 126 pass the park entrance (KSh40, 45 minutes).

The **Karen Blixen Museum** (☎ 882779; www.blixencoffeeegarden.co.ke; Karen Rd; nonresident adult/child KSh200/100; ☐ 9.30am-6pm) is the farmhouse where Karen Blixen, author of *Out of Africa*, lived between 1914 and 1931. It's set in lovely gardens, and there's accommodation and a restaurant on site. The easiest way to get here is via the Karen Metro Shuttle bus from City Hall Way (KSh20, 40 minutes). A taxi will cost about KSh900 one way.

At the **Langata Giraffe Centre** (☎ 890952; Koitobos Rd; nonresident adult/child KSh500/250; ☐ 9am-5.30pm), run by the African Fund for Endangered

NAIROBI





Wildlife (AFEW), you can observe and hand-feed Rothschild's giraffes. It's about 18km from central Nairobi; take *matatu* 24 to the Hardy shops in Langata and walk from there, or take *matatu* 126 to Magadi Rd and walk through from Mukoma Rd.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Kenya Fashion Week (☎ 0733-636300; Sarit Centre, Westlands) An expo-style fashion event held in June.

Tusker Safari Sevens (www.safarisevens.com; Impala Club, Ngong Rd, Karen) International seven-a-side rugby tournament held every June.

Kenya Music Festival (☎ 2712964; Kenyatta Conference Centre) Held over 10 days in August and features predominantly African music.

SLEEPING Budget

Iqbal Hotel (Map pp688-9; ☎ 220914; Latema Rd; dm/s/d/tr KSh350/450/600/1000) The Iqbal has been a popular budget travellers' haunt for years. It's secure and the *askari* can arrange taxis at reasonable prices.

New Kenya Lodge (Map pp688-9; ☎ 222202; www.nksafaris.com; River Rd; dm KSh350, s/d KSh650/800, without bathroom KSh450/700) Another good budget option, with friendly staff, and hot water in the evenings.

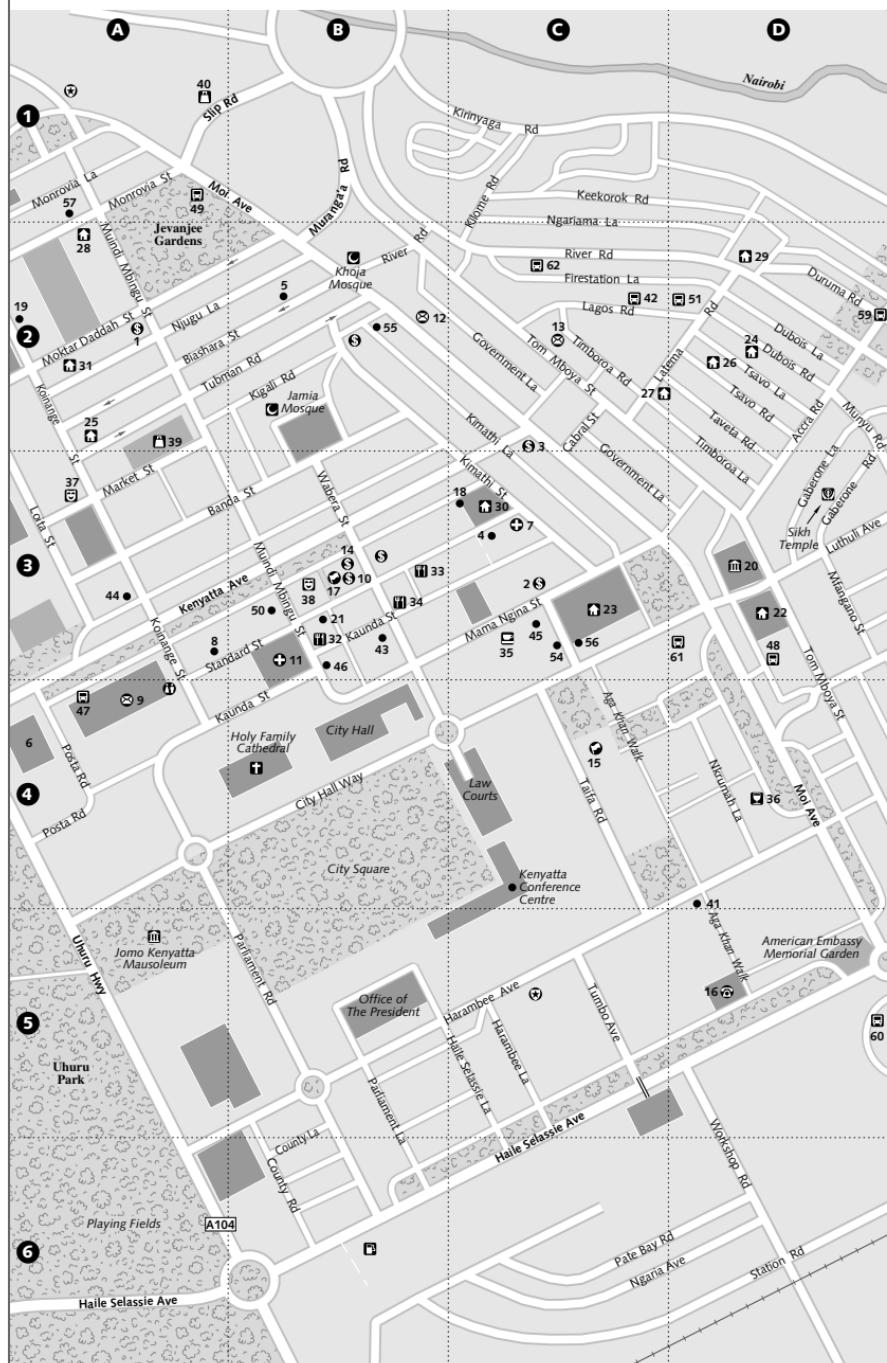
Nairobi Youth Hostel (Map pp686-7; ☎ 2723012; kyha@africaonline.co.ke; Ralph Bunche Rd, Milimani; dm KSh600-700, d without bathroom KSh800, apt KSh2000; ☈) A well looked-after budget option, Nairobi's Hostelling International (HI) branch is still usually a good place to meet other travellers. A year's HI membership costs KSh400, or you can pay a KSh100 surcharge per day. Many people have been robbed returning to the youth hostel by foot after dark; always take a *matatu* or taxi at night.

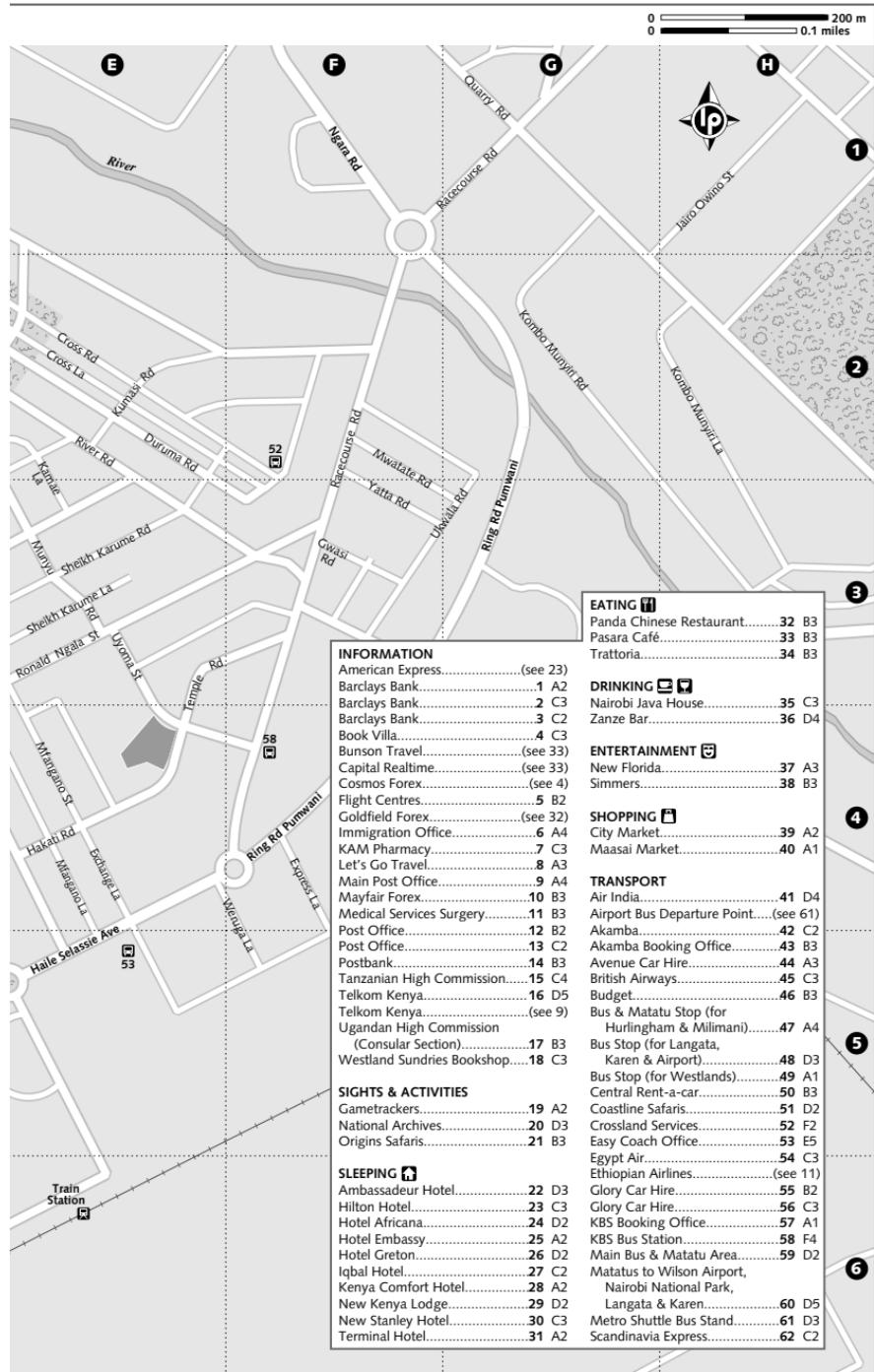
Hotel Africana (Map pp688-9; ☎ 220654; Dubois Rd; s/d/tr incl breakfast KSh650/1000/1500) The Africana has clean, bright rooms and is better looked after than many places in its class.

Upper Hill Campsite (Map pp686-7; ☎ 6750202; [www.upperhillcampsite.com](http://upperhillcampsite.com); Menengai Rd, Nairobi Hill; camp sites KSh300, tents KSh500-1100, dm/r KSh450/1100; ☈) Upper Hill offers a range of accommodation in a pleasant and secure compound, plus a well-used little restaurant and bar. Facilities include hot showers and a cosy fireplace.

YMCA (Map pp686-7; ☎ 2724116; kenaymca@wananchi.com; State House Rd; s/d KSh940/1480, without bathroom KSh690/1180) An OK place with a range of passable rooms. Rates include the YMCA fee.

CENTRAL NAIROBI





Midrange

Hotel Greton (Map pp688-9; ☎ 242891; greton@wananchi.com; Tsavo Rd; s/d/tr incl breakfast KSh1000/1300/1800) A big block hotel in the heart of the budget district, with a great balcony restaurant overlooking the street. Rooms are spacious and comfortable, and there's a gym.

Terminal Hotel (Map pp688-9; ☎ 228817; Moktar Daddah St; s/d/tr KSh1300/1600/1900) This place knows how to look after people and get the basics right – relaxed staff, great location, hot water and comfy beds with mosquito nets.

Hotel Embassy (Map pp688-9; ☎ 224087; hotelembassy@yahoo.com; Tubman Rd; s/d KSh1200/1800) Round the corner from the Terminal Hotel and offering a similar standard, with an in-house restaurant and TV lounge.

Kenya Comfort Hotel (Map pp688-9; ☎ 317606; www.kenyacomfort.com; cnr Muindi Mbingu & Monrovia Sts; s/d/tr US\$30/40/50/60) Modern, clean rooms and a cheery décor make this an attractive option, even if it's a bit of a walk to the city centre.

Ambassadeur Hotel (Map pp688-9; ☎ 246615; Tom Mboya St; s/d/tr US\$40/50/70) This big hotel, opposite the National Archives, once belonged to the Sarova chain, but although still large, the once-posh rooms are definitely showing signs of wear and tear.

Heron Hotel (Map pp686-7; ☎ 2720740; www.heronhotel.com; Mlimani Rd, Mlimani; s/d/tr KSh3295/4490/5780; ☎ ☎) Its shady days as a pick-up joint are long gone, and this revamped hotel is now a model of respectability, with bargain kitch-enette doubles.

Top End

New Stanley Hotel (Map pp688-9; ☎ 316377; www.saravahotels.com; cnr Kimathi St & Kenyatta Ave; s/d from US\$225/250; ☎ ☎ ☎) A Nairobi classic that retains the colonial look: good service, green leather, chandeliers and old-fashioned fans. Worth a price, and the various house eateries are all well regarded.

Norfolk Hotel (Map pp686-7; ☎ 216940; www.fairmont.com; Harry Thuku Rd; s/d US\$281/337, ste US\$361-557; ☎ ☎ ☎) Built in 1904, Nairobi's oldest hotel was the place to stay during colonial days, and still attracts plenty of guests who at least look like old-school settlers.

EATING

Nairobi is the food capital of Kenya and the city centre is full of places to eat; for dinner it's worth heading out to Westlands, which offers more good cuisine from all over the world.

Passara Café (Map pp688-9; ☎ 338247; Lonrho Bldg, Standard St; dishes KSh120-350; ☎ from 7am Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm Sat) A stylish, modern bar-brasserie with good snacks, sandwiches, grills and breakfasts. After 5pm it turns into a popular upscale bar.

Haandi (Map pp686-7; ☎ 4448294; The Mall Shopping Centre, Ring Rd Westlands; Westlands; mains KSh600-1100; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm; ☎) Widely regarded as the best Indian restaurant in Kenya.

Panda Chinese Restaurant (Map pp688-9; ☎ 213018; Fedha Towers, Kaunda St; mains KSh400-1500; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 6-10pm) With the best Chinese food in Nairobi, this very classy restaurant is hidden away on Kaunda St.

Trattoria (Map pp688-9; ☎ 340855; cnr Wabera & Kaunda Sts; mains KSh550-1800; ☎ 7.30am-midnight) This long-running and very popular Italian joint could hold its head up in Melbourne or San Francisco, offering excellent pizza, pasta dishes, varied mains and a whole page of desserts.

Carnivore (Map pp688-9; set meals KSh1325) Kenya's most famous *nyama choma* restaurant, this place has been frequented by tourists, expats and wealthy locals alike for 25 years. The huge barbecue pit is laden with real swords of beef, pork, lamb, chicken and farmed game meats. It's out in Langata but 'tours' are organised from hotels all over town.

There are Nakumatt and Uchumi supermarkets all over, and the **Sarit Centre** (Map pp686-7; ☎ 3747408; www.saritcentre.com; Parklands Rd, Westlands) has a huge food court on the 2nd floor.

DRINKING

There are some friendly watering holes around Tom Mboya St and Moi Ave, and the Westlands drinking scene attracts a lot of expats.

Zanje Bar (Map pp688-9; ☎ 222532; Kenya Cinema Plaza, Moi Ave) A lively and friendly top-floor bar with pool tables, a dance floor, and cheap beer, so that from Friday to Sunday it rocks until the early hours.

Gypsy's Bar (Map pp686-7; ☎ 4440836; Woodvale Grove, Westlands) This is probably the most popular bar in Westlands, pulling in Kenyans, expats and prostitutes. It's as close as you'll get to a gay-friendly venue in Kenya.

Western café culture has hit Nairobi at last and **Nairobi Java House** (Map pp688-9; ☎ 313565; www.nairobjavahouse.com; Mama Ngina St; snacks KSh80-200; ☎ 7am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) offers that elusive decent coffee plus many other tasty treats; thankfully, there's also a branch at Jomo Kenyatta airport.

ENTERTAINMENT

There's a good selection of dance clubs in the centre of Nairobi, but men will generally get hassled by female prostitutes in all of them. **Pavement** (Map pp686-7; ☎ 441711; Waiyaki Way, Westlands; admission KSh500) is the dance floor of choice for most resident expats, while you might try **Simmers** (Map pp688-9; ☎ 217659; cnr Kenyatta Ave & Muindi Mbingu St; admission free) for a bit of true African rhythm.

New Florida (Map pp688-9; ☎ 215014; Koinange St; men/women KSh200/100; ☰ to 6am, later Sat & Sun) is the 'Mad House', a big, rowdy club that's usually crammed with bruisers, cruisers, hookers, hustlers and curious tourists. Entry is usually free before 9pm.

SHOPPING

Souvenir prices are typically higher in Nairobi than elsewhere in the country.

City Market (Map pp688-9; Muindi Mbingu St) Has dozens of stalls open daily, selling woodcarvings, drums, spears, shields, soapstone, Maasai jewellery and clothing.

Spinners Web (Map pp686-7; ☎ 440882; Viking House, Waiyaki Way, Westlands) Works with workshops and self-help groups around the country. It's a bit like a handicrafts version of Ikea, with goods displayed the way they might look in Western living rooms, but there's some classy stuff on offer including carpets, wall hangings, ceramics, wooden bowls, baskets and clothing.

Maasai Market (Map pp688-9; ☰ Tue) Busy, popular Maasai markets are held every Tuesday on the waste ground near Slip Rd in town.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

The national carrier **Kenya Airways** (Map pp686-7; ☎ 3274000; Barclays Plaza, Loita St) operates international and domestic services out of Jomo Kenyatta International Airport.

Airkenya (☎ 501601; Wilson Airport, Langata Rd) and **Safarilink** (☎ 600777; Wilson Airport, Langata Rd) offer domestic services to many smaller destinations at competitive prices.

Bus

Most long-distance bus-company offices are based in Nairobi's River Rd area. Numerous companies do the run to Mombasa, leaving in the early morning or late in the evening; the trip takes eight to 10 hours. Buses leave from outside each company's office, and fares cost

KSh400 to KSh700. **Coastline Safaris** (Map pp688-9; ☎ 217592; cnr Latema & Lagos Rds) buses are the most comfortable.

Akamba (Map pp688-9; ☎ 340430; akamba_prs@skyweb.co.ke; Lagos Rd) buses serve Eldoret, Kakamega, Kisumu, Kitale, Mombasa, Uganda and Tanzania, leaving from Lagos Rd; there's a **booking office** (Map pp688-9; ☎ 222027; Wabera St) near City Hall.

The government-owned **Kenya Bus Service** (KBS; ☎ 229707) is another large operator. It's cheaper than Akamba, but the buses are much slower. The main depot is located on Uyoma St, and there's a **KBS booking office** (Map pp688-9; ☎ 341250; cnr Muindi Mbingu & Monrovia Sts) in the city centre.

Easy Coach (Map pp688-9; ☎ 210711; easycoach@wananchi.com; Haile Selassie Ave) is a reliable new company serving western Kenyan destinations on the Kisumu/Kakamega route.

The **Country Bus Station** (Map pp686-7; Landhies Rd) is a hectic, disorganised place that has buses running to Busia, Eldoret, Kakamega, Kisumu, Malaba, Meru, Nakuru, Nanyuki and Nyeri.

Typical fares:

Destination	Fare (KSh)	Duration (hr)
Eldoret	350-500	3
Kakamega	400-500	5
Kisumu	400-550	4
Kitale	400-600	5
Malindi	800	9-10
Mombasa	500-1000	6-10
Naivasha	130	1-1½
Nakuru	200-300	2
Nanyuki	200	2

Matatu

Most matatus leave from Latema, Accra, River and Cross Rds, and fares are similar to the buses. The biggest operator is **Crossland Services** (Map pp688-9; ☎ 245377; Cross Rd).

Train

Nairobi train station has a **booking office** (☎ 221211; Station Rd; ☰ 9am-noon & 2-6.30pm). Trains for Mombasa (1st/2nd class KSh3160/2275, 14 to 16 hours) leave at 7pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The return services depart at 7pm on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday.

For Kisumu (1st/2nd class KSh1415/720, 13 hours), trains depart at 6.30pm on the same

days as the Mombasa services. It's advisable to book a few days in advance for either of these routes.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Kenya's principal international airport, **Jomo Kenyatta International Airport** (☎ 825400), is 15km out of the city centre. There's now a dedicated airport bus run by Metro Shuttle (US\$8, 40 minutes) that can drop you off at hotels in the city centre. Going the other way, the main departure point is across from the Hilton Hotel (Map pp688–9).

Your only option at night is to take a taxi. The asking price is usually about KSh1200 in either direction.

Bus

Most of the city bus services run by **KBS** (☎ 229707) pass through central Nairobi, but the main KBS terminus is on Uyoma St, east of the centre. Useful services include bus 23 from Jevanjee Gardens for Westlands (KSh10).

Matatu

Nairobi's horde of *matatus* follow the same routes as buses and display the same route numbers. For Westlands, you can pick up *matatu* 23 on Moi Ave or Latema Rd. *Matatus* 125 and 126 to Langata leave from in front of the train station. You should keep an eye on your valuables on all *matatus*.

Taxi

Nairobi's taxis are overpriced rust-buckets that leak choking fumes, but you've little choice but to use them, particularly at night. Fares are negotiable, but any journey within the central Nairobi area costs KSh250 and you can expect to pay up to KSh500 to get to Westlands.

THE RIFT VALLEY

LAKE NAIVASHA

☎ 0311

The area around Naivasha was one of the first settled by *wazungu* (whites), and is now one of the largest remaining expat communities in Kenya. The freshwater lake itself is home to an incredible variety of birds, including the African fish eagle. The surrounding countryside is a major agricultural area.

Sights & Activities

On the eastern side of Lake Naivasha is **Crescent Island** (adult/child nonresident US\$14/7), a wildlife sanctuary you can visit by boat or car.

A couple of kilometres past Fisherman's Camp on Moi South Lake Rd you'll find **Elsamere Conservation Centre** (☎ 2021055; elsa@africaonline.co.ke; admission KSh500; ☎ 8am–6.30pm), the former home of Joy Adamson of *Born Free* fame. Entry includes afternoon tea (with a chance to see black-and-white colobus monkeys), and accommodation is available.

Sleeping

All sites listed are on or near Moi South Lake Rd.

Fisherman's Camp (☎ 2030088; camp sites KSh200, dm KSh600, s/tw with shared bathrooms from KSh850/1700) Spread along the grassy southern shore, this is a perennial favourite of campers, overland companies and hungry hippos. There's a popular bar and restaurant, but with overpriced, basic rooms and *bandas*, camping is the best option.

Top Camp (☎ 2030276; camp sites KSh200, s/tw bandas from KSh500/1000, 5-person cottages KSh5000) Boasting crazy lake views from a hill-top perch, Top Camp is a quiet place with various tin-roofed, bamboo-walled *bandas* (almost all have private bathrooms).

Crayfish Camp (☎ 2020239; craycamp@africaonline.co.ke; camp sites KSh250, s without bathroom KSh750, s/d with bathroom KSh2500/3000; ☎) Another popular spot that at times can seem more like a beer garden than a camp site. All rooms, including the pricier ones, are simple but fine, and there's a restaurant, two bars, kitchen facilities, and tent, bicycle and boat hire.

Burch's Marina (☎ 0733-660372; camp sites KSh200, 2-person rondavels KSh600, cottages d/tr/q KSh2200/2600/3000) One of the long-standing Naivasha options, this one does it well with a pleasant, well-shaded site, hot showers and a communal cooking area. Advance booking is mandatory.

Kongoni Game Valley (☎ 2021070; www.kgvalley.com; full board per person US\$150; ☎) A grand colonial farmhouse offering the best of African safari charm. Rooms surround the house's lovely courtyard, and boast rich rugs, comfortable beds and bear-claw bathtubs.

Lake Naivasha Sopa Resort (☎ 2050358, Nairobi 020-3750235; full board s/d US\$190/250; ☎) A newish resort with huge luxury cottages plus a pool, gym, sauna, and lovely bar and restaurant set-up.

Getting There & Away

Frequent *matatus* (KSh80, one hour) run along Moi South Lake Rd from Naivasha town, passing the turn-offs to Hell's Gate National Park and Fisherman's Camp.

HELL'S GATE NATIONAL PARK

Hell's Gate (✉ 050-2020284; adult/child US\$15/5) is unique among Kenya's parks, as you are allowed to walk or cycle unguided across its breadth. There's dramatic scenery, with looming cliffs, gorges and basalt columns. Lurking lions and leopards add to the excitement! Marking the eastern entrance to Hell's Gate Gorge is **Fischer's Tower**, one of the park's many popular rock-climbing sites.

Lake Naivasha (opposite) makes a convenient base for exploring the park, but camping here is recommended and Ol Dubai and Nairobi camp sites are probably the best. Access is by private vehicle or by hiring a bike from Lake Naivasha (opposite).

NAKURU

✉ 051 / pop 163,000

Although Nakuru is Kenya's fourth-largest town, it still has a relaxed atmosphere and is on the doorstep of the delightful Lake Nakuru National Park – you can see flamingos on the lake from high spots in town.

There are numerous banks and foreign-exchange bureaus for changing cash and travellers' cheques; Barclays ATMs are the most reliable. **Dreams Cyber World** (Kenyatta Lane; per hr KSh120; ✉ 8am-8pm, closed 1-2pm Fri) has fast connections.

Sleeping & Eating

Crater View Lodge (✉ 2216352; Mburu Gichua Rd; s/tw KSh300/350) All rooms face a bright inner courtyard and the twins are great value, even if the bathrooms are a bit rough.

Mount Sinai Hotel (✉ 2211779; Bazaar Rd; s/tw/tr KSh400/600/700) A big, clean place; try to get a room on the scenic roof terrace.

Midland Hotel (✉ 2212125; Geoffrey Kamau Rd; s/d from KSh2500/4000) This popular place in the town centre has a wide range of rooms with wall-to-wall carpets and varying levels of comfort.

America Hotel (✉ 2216013; merica@kenyaweb.com; Kenyatta Ave; half-board s/d US\$65/110; ✉ ✉) A contemporary tower hosting Nakuru's only top-end rooms and best swimming pool (non-guests KSh200).

Highly recommended by Nakuru's expat community, the **Bamboo Hut Chinese Restaurant** (Giddy Plaza, George Moraga Rd; meals KSh300-700) serves great Chinese fare, while one of the best places for cheap Kenyan dishes is **Ribbons Restaurant** (Guise Rd; meals KSh50-200). **Tipsy Restaurant** (Gusii Rd; mains KSh100-250) offers reasonable value for Indian and Western-style food.

Getting There & Away

Buses, *matatus* and occasional Peugeots leave for Naivasha (KSh120, 1½ hours), Nyahururu (KSh100, 1½ hours), Eldoret (KSh200, 2½ hours), Nairobi (KSh200, three hours), Kitale (KSh350, 3½ hours) and Kisumu (KSh350, 3½ hours).

LAKE NAKURU NATIONAL PARK

Lake Nakuru National Park (✉ 051-2217151; adult/child US\$30/10, smartcard required) rivals Amboseli as Kenya's second-most-visited park. This is one of the best places in Kenya to see leopards, and white rhinos are commonly seen at the lake's southern end, but the park's most famous attraction is the flamingos that ring the lake in thousands.

The main gate is 2km south of the centre of Nakuru. KWS smartcards are available here. **Backpackers' Campsite** (adult/child US\$10/5) is a large public camp site just inside the main gate with the park's best camping facilities.

A nice, friendly camp site with clean dorms, simple singles and two-bed *bandas*, **Wildlife Club of Kenya Youth Hostel** (✉ 051-850929; dm KSh150, s without bathroom KSh300, s/tw with bathroom KSh500/1000) comes complete with cooking areas. **Wildlife Club of Kenya Guesthouse** (✉ 051-851559; PO Box 33, Nakuru; s/tw without bathroom KSh800/1600) is great: facilities include hot showers, TV lounge, and use of a fridge, gas cooker and microwave. Rooms are clean and comfortable.

Sarova Lion Hill Lodge (✉ 020-2713333; www.sarova-hotels.com; full board s/d from US\$210/280; ✉) is an upmarket lodge that offers 1st-class service and comfort from high up the lake's eastern slopes. There are great views from the restaurant-bar and most rooms.

A taxi from Nakuru for a few hours should cost KSh2000, though you'll have to bargain hard.

LAKE BOGORIA NATIONAL RESERVE

In the late 1990s this reserve's shallow soda lake achieved fame as 'the new home of the flamingo', with a population peaking at

two million birds. Flamingo numbers have dropped significantly since then, but this **reserve** (✉ 0722-377252; adult/child KSh1500/200) is still a fascinating place to visit, with **hot springs** and **geysers** along the shore.

Camping is the only sleeping option within the reserve, either at the fantastic **Fig Tree Camp** (camp sites KSh500) beneath a stand of massive fig trees, or **Acacia Camp** (camp sites KSh500), a shady lakeside site with some soft grass for pitching tents. Bring your own water.

Set in lovely grounds 2km before the Lobi gate, **Lake Bogoria Hotel** (✉ 051-2216441; lakebogoria@wanachi.com; s/d incl breakfast US\$70/90;) is a quality option: hotel rooms are large and bright, while those in the new cottages (for the same price) are modern and much more comfortable.

The best way to reach and explore the reserve is with a private vehicle, although *matatus* from Marigat (KSh50, 30 minutes) go to the main park gate, from where you can walk.

LAKE BARINGO

051

This freshwater Rift Valley lake is encircled by mountains and dotted with picturesque islands. Bird-watchers come here from all over the world, and talented local bird guides can be hired at Roberts Camp and Lake Baringo Club. Habituated fish eagles dive for fish on popular **boat rides**, making for great (if contrived) photo opportunities.

Roberts' Camp (✉ 851879; camp sites KSh350, bands s/tw without bathroom KSh1000/2000, 4-person cottages KSh5000) is a fantastic camp site right on the lake, with tents, comfortable cottages, cooking facilities and an open-air restaurant-bar. The local hippos can add a frisson of excitement to any stay here.

Set within sprawling lakeside gardens, **Lake Baringo Club** (✉ 850880, Nairobi 020-650500; baringo@africaonline.co.ke; Kampi ya Samaki; full board s/d US\$150/180;) is a grand old place with pleasant rooms featuring four-poster beds and a terrace. Facilities include a swimming pool, games room, badminton court and library, all open to nonguests for KSh200. A bus leaves Kampi ya Samaki for Nakuru (KSh 200, 2½ hours) every morning between 6.30am and 9.30am.

A bus leaves Kampi ya Samaki (Baringo's main village) for Nakuru each morning (KSh 200, 2½ hours).

CENTRAL KENYA

MOUNT KENYA NATIONAL PARK

After seeing the 5199m worth of dramatic remnants that today comprise Mt Kenya (Africa's second-highest mountain), it's easy to understand why the Kikuyu people deified it and still believe it's the seat of their supreme god Ngai. Mt Kenya also has the rare honour of being both a Unesco World Heritage site and a Unesco Biosphere Reserve.

Mt Kenya's highest peaks, Batian (5199m) and Nelion (5188m), can only be reached by mountaineers with technical skills. However, Point Lenana (4985m), the third-highest peak, can be reached by trekkers and is the usual goal for most mortals, offering a fantastic experience and superb views over the surrounding country.

Information

The daily fees for the **national park** (✉ 061-55645; adult/child US\$15/8) are charged upon entry, so you must estimate the length of your stay. If you overstay, you must pay the difference when leaving. You'll have to pay an additional KSh50 per day for each guide and porter you take with you. Always ask for a receipt.

Before you leave Nairobi, buy a copy of *Mt Kenya 1:50,000 Map & Guide* (1993) by Mark Savage and Andrew Wielochowski. Lonely Planet's *Trekking in East Africa* has more information, details on wilder routes and some of the more esoteric variations that are possible on Mt Kenya.

You can **camp** (adult/child US\$10/5) anywhere on the mountain; the nightly fee is payable to KWS at any gate. Most people camp near the huts or bunkhouses, as there are often toilets and water nearby. There are several huts on the mountain owned by MCK, but the only one that's in reasonable shape nowadays sits 5188m up on Nelion's summit – not for the typical punter!

Safety

Mt Kenya's accessibility and the technical ease with which Point Lenana is reached create their own problems for enthusiastic trekkers. Many people ascend much too quickly and end up suffering from altitude sickness. By spending at least three nights on the ascent, you'll enjoy yourself much more; with proper clothes and equipment, you stand a much better chance of making it back down as well.

Weather can be unpredictable, harsh, cold, wet and windy. The trek to Point Lenana isn't easy and people die on the mountain every year. The best time to trek is from mid-January to late February or from late August to September.

You'd be flirting with death by not taking a guide or qualified companion. Even those with ample experience should take a guide if attempting the Summit Circuit.

To avoid severe headaches caused by dehydration or altitude sickness, drink at least 3L of fluid per day and bring rehydration sachets.

Equipment Hire

Well-maintained hire gear is available at the Naro Moru River Lodge (p696). Most guiding companies will have cheaper equipment for hire, although you'll have less choice and lower standards.

Guides, Cooks & Porters

The KWS issues vouchers to all registered guides and porters, who should also hold identity cards; they won't be allowed into the park without them.

Basic qualified guides and cooks will cost you about US\$10 to US\$12 per day, while more knowledgeable guides will set you back about US\$15 per day. These fees don't include park entry fees and tips (budget around a day's wages per person as a tip, but make it clear it is only for good service).

Porters will carry up to 18kg for three-day trips or 16kg for longer trips, excluding the weight of their own food and equipment. If you want them to carry more, you'll have to negotiate an added cost.

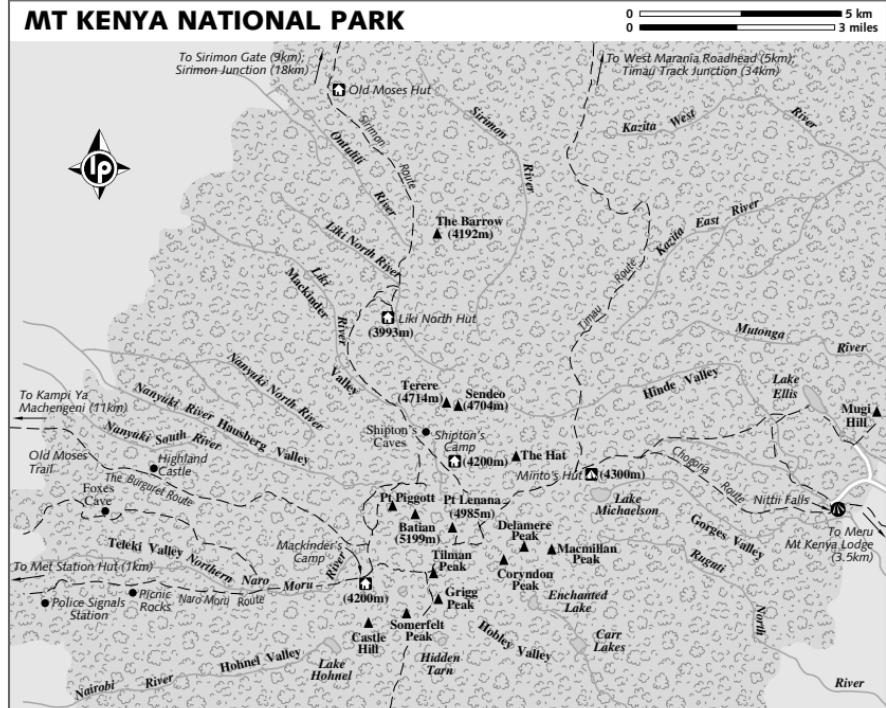
Organised Treks

All-inclusive packages – which include park entry and camping fees, food, huts, a guide, cook and porters, and transfers to and from the mountain – can be a good deal, particularly if you don't have any equipment.

Picking the right company is extremely important, as an unqualified or inexperienced guide could put you in real danger as well as spoil your trip.

Mountain Rock Safaris **Resorts & Trekking Services** (✉ 020-242133; www.mountainrockkenya.com) is a real specialist at Mt Kenya climbs and runs

MT KENYA NATIONAL PARK



the Mountain Rock Lodge (right) near Naro Moru. Its day rates for all-inclusive trips start at US\$135 per person per day.

All-inclusive trips from Naro Moru River Lodge (right) are more expensive than most (US\$135 to US\$220 per person per day), but you're guaranteed beds in the Met Station Hut and Mackinder's Camp.

The following local companies organise their own treks:

KG Mountain Expeditions (✉ 062-62403; www.kenyaexpeditions.com) Offers all-inclusive packages from US\$265 per day (depending on group size), as well as budget options for around US\$80.

Mountain View Tours & Trekking Safaris (✉ 062-62088) Recommended by readers as being cheap and reliable. Prices are negotiable, but expect to pay around US\$60 to US\$70 per day.

Trek Routes

NARO MORU ROUTE

Although the least scenic, this is the most straightforward, popular route, and still a spectacular and very enjoyable trail. Allow a minimum of four days for the trek; it's possible in three if you arrange transport between Naro Moru and the Met Station, but doing it this quickly risks serious altitude sickness.

SIRIMON ROUTE

A popular alternative to Naro Moru, this route has more spectacular scenery, greater flexibility and a gentler rate of ascent, although it is still easy to climb too fast, so allow at least five days for the trek. It's well worth considering combining it with the Chogoria route for a six- to seven-day traverse that will really bring out the best of Mt Kenya.

CHOGORIA ROUTE

This route is justly famous for crossing some of the most spectacular and varied scenery on Mt Kenya, and is often combined with the Sirimon route (usually as the descent). The only disadvantage is the long distance between Chogoria village and the park gate. Allow at least five days for a trek here.

NARO MORU

✉ 062

The dusty little village of Naro Moru, on the western side of the mountain, is the most popular starting point for treks up Mt Kenya. There's a post office with internet access, but no banks.

The best accommodation options are a few kilometres out of town. The two lodges have great camp sites. **Naro Moru River Lodge** (✉ 62212, Nairobi 020-4443357; mt.kenya@africaonline.co.ke; dm US\$8, camp sites US\$10, half board s/tw from US\$90/120; ) is a relaxing lodge about 1.5km north of town with beautifully landscaped gardens. There's a well-equipped camp site and dormitory block, and campers can use all the hotel facilities. **Mountain Rock Lodge** (✉ 62625; info@mountainrockkenya.com; camp sites US\$5, standard s/tw US\$24/32, superior s/tw & tr US\$32/48) is 6km north of Naro Moru, tucked away in the woods less than 1km from the Nanyuki road. It is friendly and reliable, with a spacious dining room, two bars and a lounge.

About 8.5km from town and 7.5km from the park gate, **Mt Kenya Hostel & Campsite** (✉ 62412; mtkenyahostel@wananchi.com; camp sites KSh250, dm KSh400) offers simple accommodation, a large camp site, kitchen facilities, and a restaurant and bar. Mt Kenya treks can be arranged and it hires limited mountain gear.

There are plenty of buses and *matatus* heading to Nanyuki (KSh60, 30 minutes), Nyeri (KSh80, 45 minutes) and Nairobi (KSh300, three hours).

NANYUKI

✉ 062

Founded by white settlers in 1907, Nanyuki is a popular and friendly place to base Mt Kenya treks, especially if taking on the Sirimon and Burguret routes. Watch out for touts, hawkers and cheeky street kids.

Nanyuki River Camel Camp (✉ 0722-361642; camelot@wananchi.com; camp sites US\$6, half-board huts with shared bathroom US\$22) The town's only camping is at this fabulous place about 4km west of town. There are decent facilities, free firewood and excellent food. Set on the Nanyuki River, **Mt Kenya Paradise Hotel** (✉ 0722-899950; s/tw KSh400/600) is a little tired, but has large clean rooms and is a good place to meet other travellers. There's a loud disco at weekends. **Joskaki Hotel** (✉ 31473; Lumumba Rd; s/tw/d KSh300/400/450) is the best of the budget establishments and some lucky punters even get a room with a toilet seat.

Equator Chalet (✉ 31480; Kenyatta Ave; s/tw/d incl breakfast KSh850/1300/1500) is a newish place in the centre of town that gives substantial comfort bang for minimal buck. Rooms surround a breezy internal courtyard that opens onto two balcony areas and a roof terrace. **Mt Kenya Safari Club** (✉ in Nairobi 020-216940; www.fairmont.com; full

board s/d US\$270/390, 4-person cottages US\$995;  

There are daily buses and *matatus* to Nyeri (KSh100, one hour), Isiolo (KSh150, 1½ hours), Meru (KSh120, 1½ hours) and Nairobi (KSh350, three hours).

ABERDARE NATIONAL PARK

This park (☎ 061-2055024; adult/child US\$30/10, smartcard required) protects a striking stretch of moorland, peaks and forest atop the western Kinangop Plateau, and the eastern outcrop of dense rainforest, known as the Salient. Wildlife sightings are dominated by elephants and buffaloes, but black rhinos, giant forest hogs, black servals and rare black leopards are also sometimes seen.

Public camp sites and the following accommodation options must be booked through park headquarters. One of the most famous hotels in Kenya, **Treetops** (☎ 020-4452095; www.aberdaresafarihotels.com; s/d US\$198/250) has long been trading on its reputation, although its weathered exterior belies a certain charm. **Ark** (☎ 020-216940; www.fairmont.com; full board s/tw US\$210/300) is a modern, upscale version of Treetops, with a fantastic floodlit waterhole that attracts a wider array of animals.

NYAHURURU & THOMSON'S FALLS

☞ 065

Nyahururu is Kenya's highest major town and has a cool, invigorating climate. Besides Thomson's Falls, one of Kenya's most impressive waterfalls, and some nice walks, most travellers find little reason to linger more than a day or two.

Safari Lodge (Go Down Rd; s/tw KSh350/600) is clean, bright and very affordable, with hot water on demand and even sockets to charge your mobile. **Nyaki Hotel** (☎ 22313; s/tw KSh350/800) has small but comfy singles and large clean twins, all with hot showers. It's a relatively modern building off Kenyatta Rd.

With character to spare, **Thomson's Falls Lodge** (☎ 22006; tfalls@africaonline.co.ke; camp sites KSh300, s/tw incl breakfast KSh2500/3200) has fireplaces and decent facilities. The grassy camping ground is a bargain, with free firewood and hot showers.

Matatus run to Nakuru (KSh100, 1½ hours), Naivasha (KSh200, 1½ hours), Nanyuki (KSh250, three hours) and Nairobi (KSh250, three hours).

NORTHERN KENYA

ISILO

☞ 064

Isiolo is the gateway to northeastern Kenya and a vital pit-stop on the long road north. The region is populated by Samburu, Rendille, Boran and Turkana people.

Consolidated Bank of Kenya (A2 Hwy) changes cash and Amex travellers cheques, but has no ATM.

Popular with budget travellers in the past, **Jamhuri Guest House** (s/tw without bathroom KSh120/200, s/tw with bathroom KSh250) is simple, clean enough and has secure parking. About 6km south of town, **Range Land Hotel** (☎ 0721-434353; A2 Hwy; camp sites KSh200, tw cottage per person KSh1000) is a nice option, with grass to plant your tent, and the stone cottages have nice bathrooms. The **Bomen Hotel** (☎ 52389; s/tw/ste KSh900/1500/2500) has the town's brightest and most comfortable rooms. Prices are steep, but some rooms have TV and shared terraces with views.

Nairobi Express operates daily buses (KSh500, 4½ hours) at 6.45am. The bus north to Marsabit (KSh600, 8½ hours) and Moyale (KSh1200, 17 hours) picks up passengers at Nairobi Express between 11pm and midnight.

MARALAL

☞ 065

Maralal's charm lies in its frontier, rough-and-ready atmosphere, and it has gained an international reputation for its frenetic **International Camel Derby**, held between June and October.

The Kenya Commercial Bank, behind the market, changes cash and travellers cheques, but has no ATM.

Easily the best budget option in town, **Sunbird Guest House** (☎ 62015; s/tw/d KSh350/450/600) is a friendly place with clean and comfortable rooms, mosquito nets and sparkling bathrooms.

Justifiably popular with campers, **Yare Camel Club & Camp** (☎ 62295; yare@africaonline.co.ke; camp sites KSh200, s/tw/tr US\$20/28/35), 3km south of town, also has cosy wooden *bandas* with bathrooms. There's a bar and restaurant with *nyama choma* on Wednesday and Saturday. Yare also organises independent **camel safaris**; self-catered day/overnight trips cost US\$20/35 per person.

Matatus serve Nyahururu (KSh300, three hours) on a daily basis, usually in the mornings and early afternoons. There are no direct services to Nairobi; take a *matatu* or bus (KSh300, three hours) to Nyahururu and transfer there.

MARSABIT

069

The area surrounding Marsabit is actually a giant shield volcano, whose surface is peppered with hundreds of cinder cones and volcanic craters, many flooded. Mt Marsabit's highest peak, Karantin (1707m), is a rewarding 5km hike from town through lush vegetation and moss-covered trees. The town has an interesting mixture of local tribespeople.

Kenya Commercial Bank, off Post Office Rd, has no ATM but changes cash and travellers' cheques. **JeyJey Centre** (02296; A2 Hwy; s/tw/tr without bathroom KSh300/500/700, s with bathroom KSh500) is the best lodge in town. Clean rooms around a colourful courtyard have mosquito nets, and bathrooms have reliable hot water. There's also a TV room, a decent restaurant and an unattractive camp site (per person KSh150).

With security on the mend, a bus now connects Marsabit to Moyale (KSh600, 8½ hours). There's no designated stop; simply flag it down on the A2 Hwy as it comes through town around 5pm each day (en route from Nairobi!). The same service heads south to Isiolo (KSh600, 8½ hours) at 9am. Check the latest security and Ethiopian border information from locals and the police station before leaving town.

LOYANGALANI

An oasis of doum palms and natural springs populated by vivid Turkana tribespeople, Loyangalani is one of northern Kenya's most fascinating places. It overlooks Lake Turkana and is surrounded by small ridges of pillow-lava dotted with traditional Turkana stick and palm dwellings. There's little in the way of services.

Palm Shade Camp (camp sites KSh350, s/tw rondavel with shared bathroom KSh500/1000) is easily the best choice in town, with grassy camp sites under the acacias or simple rondavels, plus Loyangalani's best toilets and showers, a cooking shelter and electricity until 10pm. **Oasis Lodge** (020-503267; willtravel@swiftkenya.com; full board s/tw US\$150/200;) is an overpriced lodge offering

simple bungalows with dated bathrooms. On the positive side, there's good food and a great view from the open-air bar.

One or two trucks a week stop in Loyangalani en route to Maralal (KSh1000, 10 to 12 hours) from Marsabit.

LAKE TURKANA

If you go to Loyangalani you can't help but visit Lake Turkana. Formerly known as Lake Rudolf, and nowadays often evocatively called the 'Jade Sea', vast Lake Turkana stretches all the way to Ethiopia. High salt levels render the sandy, volcanic area around the lake almost entirely barren, but its desolation and stark, surreal beauty contrast with the colourful tribespeople that inhabit the lake's shore.

Made a World Heritage Site by Unesco in 1997, **South Island National Park** (adult/child US\$15/5) is uninhabited apart from a large croc population, poisonous snakes and feral goats. To get there, you can hire a boat from Oasis Lodge (per hour KSh2500).

WESTERN KENYA

KISUMU

057

Set on the sloping shore of Lake Victoria's Winam Gulf, Kisumu is the third-largest town in Kenya. It receives relatively few travellers, but it has a relaxed atmosphere.

Information

Abacus Cyber Cafe (Al-Imran Plaza, Oginga Odinga Rd; per hr KSh60; 08am-8pm) Internet access.

Barclays Bank (Kampala St)

Crystal Communications (Mega Plaza, Oginga Odinga Rd; per hr KSh60; 08am-6pm) Internet access.

Kenya Commercial Bank (Jomo Kenyatta Hwy)

Sanhedrin Cyber Joint (Swan Centre, Accra St; per hr KSh60; 08am-10pm) Internet access.

Standard Chartered Bank (Oginga Odinga Rd)

Sleeping

YWCA (0733-992982; dm KSh300, full board KSh500) Dirt-cheap but very basic bunks in airy rooms and clean shared bathrooms. It's off Anaawa Ave, near the market and bus station.

Razbi Guest House (02025488; Kendu Lane; s/tw without bathroom KSh400/500, s with bathroom KSh600) Small but secure rooms, with nets and passable shared toilets. There's a private TV lounge/restaurant upstairs.

Hotel Palmers (✉ 2024867; Omolo Agar Rd; s/tw KSh1000/1400) Rooms are on the small side but have decent bathrooms and fans. The hotel also has a comfortable lounge and an outdoor restaurant.

Imperial Hotel (✉ 2022211; www.imperialkisumu.com; Jomo Kenyatta Hwy; s/d incl breakfast from KSh3600/4950; ☕ ☕) Kisumu's most luxurious hotel, offering 1st-class service and the best restaurant in town; rates drop at weekends.

Eating & Drinking

For an authentic local fish fry, check out the tin-shack restaurants on the lake's shore at the end of Oginga Odinga Rd; a 1.5kg fish should set you back KSh150.

Hussein Pan House (Swan Centre, Accra St; meals KSh150-300; ☐ 6-11pm) pumps out amazing Asian selections, or head to **Mon Ami** (Mega Plaza, Oginga Odinga Rd; meals KSh150-350) for hamburgers, pasta and pizza.

Congolese bands play at various venues, such as the **Kimwa Grand** (Jomo Kenyatta Hwy), along the roads out of town; check flyers and ask locals who are plugged into the scene.

Getting There & Away

Matatus offer direct services to Kakamega (KSh120, one hour) and Eldoret (KSh250, 2½ hours).

Akamba has four daily buses to Nairobi (KSh500, seven hours) via Nakuru (KSh300, 4½ hours), and there's a daily service to Kampala (KSh750, seven hours).

The train service to Nairobi (1st/2nd class KSh1415/720, 13 hours) is scheduled to depart on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday at 6.30pm.

ELDORET

✉ 053

This large service town offers little to travellers apart from banks and a good night's sleep. The post office and most banks are on the main drag (Uganda Rd). **Safari Forex Bureau** (KVDA Plaza, Oloo Rd) exchanges cash and travellers cheques with no commission and, does Western Union transfers. For internet, try **Cyber Hawk Internet Café** (Nandi Arcade, Nandi Rd; per hr KSh60)

Sleeping & Eating

New Lincoln Hotel (✉ 0723-676699; Oloo Rd; s/d KSh700/900) The most comfortable of the budget options, this pleasant place has decent rooms spread around a courtyard.

Naiberi River Campsite (✉ 2063047; campsite@africaonline.co.ke; camp sites KSh250, dm KSh800, cabins KSh2000; ☕) This place, 22km southeast of town, is the best option for camping, and is very popular with overland companies. Phone for directions.

Sirikwa Hotel (✉ 2063614; hotelsirikwa@multitechweb.com; Elgeyo Rd; s/tw incl breakfast KSh4000/5000, ste from KSh8500; ☕) Eldoret's only top-end hotel boasts a long list of facilities, including a lovely swimming pool and beautiful terrace.

Will's Pub & Restaurant (Uganda Rd; meals KSh200-450) A popular spot for burgers and grills with fries.

Getting There & Away

The main bus and *matatu* stand is in the centre of town, by the market. Regular *matatus*/Peugeots serve Kisumu (*matatus*/Peugeots KSh250/300, 2½ hours), Nakuru (KSh200/400, 2¾ hours) and Nairobi (KSh400/700, six hours). Buses duplicate these routes.

Lakamba (Moi St) buses to Nairobi (KSh500) depart at 10.30am and 9pm, via Nakuru (KSh250). There are also services to Kampala at noon (KSh1000, six hours) and midnight (KSh1150).

KAKAMEGA FOREST RESERVE

✉ 056

This small slab of virgin tropical rainforest is all that's left in Kenya of the once-mighty Guineo-Congolian rainforest. It boasts an extraordinary biodiversity, including 330 species of bird, seven different primate species and around 400 species of butterfly. Excellent official **guides** (per person for short/long walk KSh200/600), trained by the Kakamega Biodiversity Conservation and Tour Operators Association, can help you find birds and monkeys.

Udo's Bandas & Campsite (✉ 30603; PO Box 879, Kakamega; camp sites adult/child US\$8/5, bandas per person US\$10) is a tidy, well-maintained KWS-run camp site with simple thatched *bandas*. Mosquito nets are provided, but bring your own sleeping bag and supplies. **Rondo Retreat** (✉ 30268; tfrondo@multitechweb.com; full board s/tw KSh9000/11,600) has an idyllic setting in a former 1920s saw miller's residence, about 3km east of Isecheno. Seven cottages, each with striking traditional fittings and large verandas, sit in gorgeous gardens through which plenty of wildlife passes.

Matatus heading north towards Kitale can drop you at the access road for the main

Buyangu area of the reserve, about 18km north of Kakamega town (KSh50).

MASAI MARA NATIONAL RESERVE

Populated with an astonishing amount of wildlife, this world-renowned **reserve** (adult/child US\$30/10) is a 1510-sq-km continuation of the equally famous Serengeti Plains over the border in Tanzania. Lions are found in large prides everywhere, and there are also cheetahs, leopards, and large numbers of elephants, buffaloes, zebras and hippos. But the ultimate attraction is undoubtedly the annual wildebeest migration in July and August, when millions of these bleating, cavorting animals move north from the Serengeti, seeking fresh pasture, before turning south again around October.

Most visitors take in 'the Mara' on an organised safari (see p685 for companies in Nairobi) and there's little benefit in self-driving. Expensive but unforgettable **balloon safaris** (per person US\$390) can be arranged through top-end lodges.

Maasai people live in villages bordering the national reserve, and there's a rather over-touristed village between the Mara's Oloolaimutiek and Senekani gates where you can take photos for a negotiable entry fee (usually around US\$20).

Sleeping

Acacia Camp (✉ 020-210024; camp sites US\$5, s/tw with shared bathroom US\$35/40) A quaint camp with sheltered semi-permanent tents, although there is little shade for campers. Bathrooms are clean with hot water in the evening, and there are cooking areas and a bar.

Fig Tree Camp (✉ 020-605328; sales@madahotels.com; full board s/d US\$185/230; ☎) Comfortable safari tents overlook the Talek River, and there's a small pool and a treetop bar.

Kichwa Tembo Camp (✉ 020-3740920; alice@conscorp.co.ke; full board s/d US\$185/370; ☎) Just outside the northern boundary, Kichwa has permanent tents with stone bathrooms, tasteful furnishings and spectacular savannah views.

Keekorok Lodge (✉ bookings 020-4447151; full board s/d US\$200/250; ☎) This has always been a great option, with bungalows, cabins and cottages to choose from. It has the usual top-end facilities, with the added attraction of a hippo pool.

Mara Intrepids (✉ 020-4446651; maraintrepids@heritagelodges.co.ke; full board incl wildlife drives s/d US\$450/615; ☎) The 30 permanent tents have canopied

four-posters and stone bathrooms; there's a lovely riverside pool.

THE COAST

MOMBASA

✉ 041 / pop 653,000

Mombasa is the largest city on the Kenyan coast and also the largest coastal port in East Africa. Traders have been coming here since at least the 12th century, and during its bloody history Mombasa changed hands dozens of times between the Arab-Swahilis, Portuguese, Omanis and finally the British.

Orientation

The main thoroughfare, Digo Rd and its southern extension Nyerere Ave, run north-south through the city. The Likoni ferry leaves from the southern end of Nyerere Ave.

Running west from the junction between Nyerere Ave and Digo Rd is Moi Ave, where you'll find the tourist office and a useful landmark – huge aluminium elephant tusks forming an M over the road. Heading east from the junction, Nkrumah Rd provides the easiest access to the Old Town and Fort Jesus.

North of the city centre, Digo Rd becomes Abdel Nasser Rd, where you'll find many of the bus stands for Nairobi and destinations north along the coast. There's another big group of bus offices west of here at the intersection of Jomo Kenyatta Ave and Mwembe Tayari Rd. The train station is at the intersection of Mwembe Tayari and Haile Selassie Rds.

Information

EMERGENCY

AAR Health Services (✉ 312409; ☎ 24hr)
Police (✉ 222121, 999)

INTERNET ACCESS

Blue Room (✉ 224021; www.blueroomonline.com; Haile Selassie Rd; per min KSh2; ☎ 9am-10pm)

Info Café (✉ 227621; infomombasa@yahoo.com; Ambala House, Nkrumah Rd; per min KSh1)

Wavetek (✉ 0735-295007; TSS Towers, Nkrumah Rd; per min KSh1) Also offers international calls from KSh15 per minute.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Aga Khan Hospital (✉ 312953; akhm@mba.akhmkenya.org; Vanga Rd)

Pandya Memorial Hospital (✉ 229252; Kimathi Ave)

MONEY

Barclays Bank Nkrumah Rd (224573); Digo Rd (311660) Barclays has an ATM.

Kenya Commercial Bank Moi Ave (220978); Nkrumah Rd (312523) Has an ATM.

Postbank (3434077; Moi Ave) Western Union money transfers.

Pwani Forex Bureau (221727; Digo Rd)

Standard Chartered Bank (224614; Treasury Sq, Nkrumah Rd) Has an ATM.

POST

Post office (227705; Digo Rd)

TELEPHONE

Post Global Services (230581;

inglobal@africaonline.co.ke; Maungano Rd; 7.30am-8pm) International calls cost around KSh85 per minute.

Telkom Kenya (312811) Locations on Nkrumah Rd and Moi Ave.

TOURIST INFORMATION

KWS office (312744, 312745; Nguu Court, Mama Ngina Dr; 6am-6pm) Sells and recharges smartcards.

Mombasa & Coast Tourist Office (225428; mcta@kenya.com; Moi Ave; 8am- 4.30pm) Provides information and can organise accommodation, tours, guides and transport.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Dial-A-Tour (221411; dialatour@kenya.com; Oriental Bldg, Nkrumah Rd)

Express Travel (315405; PO Box 90631, Nkrumah Rd) American Express agent. Mail can be held here for Amex cardholders.

Fourways Travel (223344; Moi Ave)

Sights

Mombasa's biggest tourist attraction is partially ruined **Fort Jesus**, which was built by the Portuguese in 1593 and dominates the harbour entrance. These days it houses a **museum** (222425; nmkfortj.swiftmombasa.com; nonresident adult/child KSh200/100; 8am-6pm), which exhibits mostly ceramics, but also finds from the Portuguese frigate *Santo António de Tanná*, and the fascinating culture and traditions of the nine coastal Mijikenda tribes.

Mombasa's **Old Town** doesn't have the medieval charm of Lamu or Zanzibar, but it's still an interesting area to wander around. The houses here are characteristic of coastal East African architecture, with ornately carved doors and window frames and fretwork balconies.

Sleeping

All the places listed in this section have fans and mosquito nets (essential during the hot season).

Beracha Guest House (0722-673798; Haile Selassie Rd; s/d KSh500/750) A popular central choice with clean rooms of varying shapes; there's a cheap restaurant on the premises.

Evening Guest House (221380; Mnazi Moja Rd; s/d KSh800/11,000, without bathroom KSh700/900) Set in a thatched courtyard behind its own large restaurant area. Most rooms are good value though some are a bit small.

Glory Bed & Breakfast (228282; Haile Selassie Rd; s/d/tr incl breakfast KSh750/1100/1450) Adequate if a little cramped: rooms have fans but no mosquito nets. Cheaper rooms with shared bathroom are available.

New Palm Tree Hotel (312623; Nkrumah Rd; s/d KSh1160/1740) Character and charm in spades, with all the rooms set around a fantastic roof terrace.

Castle Royal Hotel (220373; info@680hotel.co.ke; Moi Ave; s/d/tr KSh2500/3500/4500;) The best hotel in town and one of the best deals in the whole of Kenya, the newly renovated Castle Royal has TV, phone, fridge and safe in every room, plus an excellent breakfast in the cool terrace restaurant at the front.

Royal Court Hotel (223379; royalcourt@swiftmombasa.com; Haile Selassie Rd; s US\$60-70, d US\$75-95, ste US\$130;) Stylish business hotel with good service and facilities, disabled access, and excellent food at the rooftop Tawa Terrace restaurant.

Eating

Explore the Old Town for cheap, authentic Swahili cuisine; most places are Muslim-run, so no alcoholic drinks are sold and they're closed until after sunset during Ramadan.

New Chetna Restaurant (224477; Haile Selassie Rd; mains KSh200-300) A very popular South Indian canteen with a long list of vegetarian goodies and great-value *thalis*.

Shehnai Restaurant (224801; Fatemi House, Maungano Rd; mains from KSh290; lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Mombasa's classiest curry house specialises in tandoori and *mughlai* (north Indian) cuisine, and has a huge menu.

Two recommended places among Mombasa's limited café scene are **Cozy Inn** (0733-925707; Kibonki Rd; mains KSh80-195;) a relatively new addition to the Old Town scene; and **Pistacchio Café** (221989; cnr Meru Rd & Mwindani Rd;

buffet lunch KSh450; ☎ Mon-Sat), which has excellent ice cream and popular lunchtime buffets, usually consisting of a mixture of Indian and Western dishes.

Self-caterers should head to **Nakumatt supermarket** (Nyerere Ave) or **Main market** (Digo Rd) Mombasa's dilapidated 'covered' market building.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Kenya Airways (☎ 221251; www.kenya-airways.com; TSS Towers, Nkrumah Rd) flies to Nairobi at least six times daily (KSh6835, one hour).

Mombasa Air Safari (☎ 433061; www.mombasaair.safari.com; Moi International Airport) flies to Malindi (US\$21, 25 minutes) and Lamu (US\$90, 1½ hours).

BUS & MATATU

There are dozens of daily trips to and from Nairobi (mostly in the early morning and late evening). Daytime services take at least six hours, while the overnight trip takes anywhere from eight to 10 hours. Fares vary from KSh500 to KSh1000. Most companies have at least four departures daily. Recommended companies include the following:

Akamba (☎ 490269; Jomo Kenyatta Ave)

Busscar (☎ 222854; Abdel Nasser Rd)

Busstar (☎ Nairobi 02-219525; Abdel Nasser Rd)

Coastline Safaris (☎ 312083; Mwembe Tayari St)

Falcon (☎ Nairobi 02-229662) Offices on Abdel Nasser Rd and Jomo Kenyatta Ave.

Mash Express (☎ 491955; Jomo Kenyatta Ave)

Mombasa Raha (☎ 225716) Offices on Abdel Nasser Rd and Jomo Kenyatta Ave.

Msaferi (☎ 314691; Aga Khan Rd)

Numerous daily *matatus* and small minibuses to Malindi leave from in front of the Noor Mosque. Buses take up to 2½ hours (KSh100), *matatus* about two hours (KSh120).

Tawakal, Falcon, Mombasa Raha and TSS Express have buses to Lamu, most leaving at around 7am (report 30 minutes early) from their offices on Abdel Nasser Rd. Buses take around seven hours to reach the Lamu ferry at Mokoke (KSh400 to 500), stopping in Malindi (KSh150, two hours).

For buses and *matatus* to the beaches south of Mombasa you first need to get off the island via the Likoni ferry (see right). Very frequent buses and *matatus* leave from the mainland ferry terminal and travel down the southern coast.

TRAIN

The popular overnight train to/from Nairobi leaves Mombasa at 7pm on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. The fares are KSh3160/2275 in 1st/2nd class with dinner, breakfast and bedding; reserve as far in advance as possible. The **booking office** (☎ 312220; ☎ 8am-5pm) is at the station in Mombasa.

Getting Around

The two Likoni ferries connect Mombasa Island with the southern mainland, running at frequent intervals throughout the day and night. It's free to pedestrians and KSh35 for a car. To get to the jetty from the city centre, take a Likoni *matatu* from Digo Rd (KSh10).

There is currently no public transport to/from the airport, so you're best taking a taxi; the fare to central Mombasa is around KSh650.

TIWI BEACH

☎ 040

Book well ahead if you intend to visit this wonderfully undeveloped beach during the high season. Beach boys and souvenir sellers are fairly prevalent at the southern end of Tiwi.

Twiga Lodge (☎ 3205126; camp sites KSh200, s/d KSh800/1500, cottages KSh1500) is the only really backpacker-oriented place in Tiwi, with a choice of a beachfront camp site, basic cottages or superior 'show rooms' (B&B KSh3000 to KSh4500). **Maweni Beach Cottages** (☎ 3300012; www.mawenibeach.com; cottages KSh3000-5500) has good facilities and attractive *makuti*-roofed cottages overlooking a peaceful cove. **Coral Cove Cottages** (☎ 3205195; coralcove.twiibeach.com; cottages KSh3500-5200) is a fantastically friendly place, with wide variety of comfy, nicely decorated cottages sleeping one to five people.

Tiwi is 3.5km from the Likoni-Ukunda road; buses and *matatus* can drop you at the turn-off (KSh30), from where you should take a taxi (KSh300) to avoid a mugging.

MALINDI

☎ 042

Malindi is all about the beach, and the coral reefs of the nearby Malindi Marine National Park offer good snorkelling and diving.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS

Bling Net (☎ 30041; Lamu Rd; per min KSh2) Also serves food.

Inter-Communications (✉ 31310; Lamu Rd; per min KSh1; ☎ 8am-11pm)
Y-Net (✉ 30171; y-netinternational@yahoo.com; Stanchart Arcade, Lamu Rd; per min KSh2)

MONEY

Barclays Bank (✉ 20656; Lamu Rd) Has an ATM.
Dollar Forex Bureau (✉ 30602; Lamu Rd) Rates may be slightly better here than at the banks.
Kenya Commercial Bank (✉ 20148; Lamu Rd) Has an ATM.
Postbank (Malindi Complex, Lamu Rd)
Standard Chartered Bank (Stanchart Arcade, Lamu Rd) Has an ATM.

Sights & Activities

Immediately offshore from Malindi, the important **Malindi Marine National Park** (adult/child US\$5/2; ☎ 7am-7pm) protects some impressive coral reefs, and there's a chance you'll see whale sharks.

Snorkelling or glass-bottomed-boat trips can be arranged at the **KWS office** (✉ 31554; malindimnp@kws.org) on the coast road south of town. The going rate is around KSh3500 per boat (five to 10 people) for a two-hour trip, and masks and snorkels are provided.

All the big hotels have dive centres, usually run in conjunction with local companies. Single dives cost €40 plus the park entry fee, while a PADI open-water diver course will cost around €330.

Sleeping

Silversands Campsite (✉ 20412; camp sites adult/child KSh200/100, bandas KSh500-600) On the southern beach strip, this is a much-loved site for travellers and there are good facilities. The simple tented *bandas* have recently been fully refurbished.

Tana Guest House (✉ 30940; Jamhuri St; s & d/tr with bathroom KSh550/650, s/d without bathroom KSh350/450) Rooms are decent for the price, with fans, mosquito nets and squat toilets. It's in a handy location for buses and cheap food.

African Pearl Hotel (✉ 0733-966167; www.africanpearl.com; Lamu Rd; s/d from KSh2000/2500, cottages KSh2400-4900; ☎ ☎) This atmospheric mid-range option, features a decent pool, outdoor bar and eating area and nice gardens. Rooms are large with netted four-posters and their own balcony.

Driftwood Beach Club (✉ 20155; www.driftwoodclub.com; Mama Ngina Rd; s/d/tr KSh5400/7800/9200, cottages KSh16,500; ☎ ☎ ☎) A classy but relaxed up-

market option right on the beach. Tastefully decorated rooms all have a veranda with sea views.

Eating

Palentine Tea Room (✉ 31412; Uhuru Rd; mains KSh60-140; ☎) A recommended all-hours Muslim canteen opposite the old market, serving stews, curries, pilau and soups in tiled surroundings.

Old Man & the Sea (✉ 31106; Mama Ngina Rd; mains KSh380-600, seafood KSh500-1900) Hands down the best grub in town, with superb fresh seafood and attentive service in an atmospheric old Moorish house on the seafront.

I Love Pizza (✉ 20672; nwright@africaonline.co.ke; Mama Ngina Rd; pizza KSh300-550, mains from KSh600) A very popular Italian restaurant on the seafront with excellent pizzas.

Getting There & Away

AirKenya (✉ 30646; Malindi Airport) and **Kenya Airways** (✉ 20237; Lamu Rd) fly daily to Nairobi (about US\$85). **Mombasa Air Safari** (✉ 041-433061) has daily flights to Mombasa (US\$21, 25 minutes) and Lamu (US\$62, 30 minutes).

Mombasa Raha has numerous daily buses to Mombasa (KSh150, two hours). Tawakal, Falcon and Zam Zam buses all leave daily for Lamu (KSh300 to Kh400, four hours).

WATAMU

☎ 042

Watamu is another popular village with sandy beaches and plenty of hotels. Offshore is the southern part of the Malindi Marine Reserve Park, and the Swahili ruins of **Gede** are a short distance away.

There are no banks here, but you can change money at foreign-exchange bureaus at the big hotels and **Tunda Tours** (✉ 32079; Beach Way Rd), which also has internet connection (per minute KSh5).

Malindi Marine Reserve Park (adult/child US\$5/2) lies around 2km offshore. Glass-bottomed boats can be hired from the **KWS office** (✉ 32393), at the end of the coast road, where you also pay the park fees. Boat operators ask from KSh1800 to KSh3500 per person. All the big hotels offer 'goggling' (snorkelling) trips to nonguests for around KSh1500.

Sleeping

Marijani Holiday Resort (✉ 32448; marijani@swiftnalindi.com; s/d €19/21, cottages €39-52) Easily the best place to stay in the village, with traditional furnish-

ings and breezy verandas. To get here, take the path beside the Mama Lucy supermarket and turn left at the Beach Way Shop.

Ascot Residence Hotel (✉ 32326; info@ascotresidence.com; Beach Way Rd; s/d KSh1600/2800, apt KSh3500-7000;) A very comfortable complex of tidy rooms and apartments set in a garden with a dolphin-shaped pool (no, really). Security is good and there's a fine pizza restaurant.

Turtle Bay Beach Club (✉ 32003; www.turtlebay.co.ke; r per person €100-130;) One of the best resorts of its kind in the area, with excellent facilities excellent and even entertainment for the kiddies.

Getting There & Around

There are *matatus* between Malindi and Watamu throughout the day (KSh50, one hour). All *matatus* pass the turn-off to the Gede ruins (KSh10). For Mombasa, the easiest option is to take a *matatu* to the highway (KSh10) and flag down a bus or *matatu* from there.

Taxis charge KSh800 to the Gede ruins and KSh1800 to Malindi.

LAMU

(✉ 042

Lamu town is a living throwback to the Swahili culture that once dominated the entire Indian Ocean coast. The winding streets, carved woods and traditional houses evoke the everyday sights and sounds of another age, and Lamu's World Heritage listing is entirely justified.

Orientation

Lamu's main thoroughfare is Kenyatta Rd, a long winding alley known popularly as 'Main St', which runs from the northern end of town past the fort and then south to the Muslim cemetery and the inland track to Shela. Most of the guesthouses are tucked away in the confusing maze of alleys located behind.

Information

The best internet connections are at the **post office** (Kenyatta Rd) and **Lynx Infosystems** (✉ 833134; per min KSh2; 8am-10pm) near the fort.

The island's one bank, **Kenya Commercial Bank** (✉ 633327; Harambee Ave), has no ATM. If you're stuck outside bank times, shopkeepers may be able to change at surprisingly reasonable rates.

The **Tourist information office** (✉ 633449; 9am-1pm & 2-4pm) is a commercial tour-and-

accommodation agency that also provides tourist information.

Sights

All of Lamu's museums are open from 8am to 6pm daily. Admission to each is KSh200/100 for a nonresident adult/child.

The **Lamu Museum** is an excellent introduction to the culture and history of Lamu Island. It has displays on Swahili culture, the famous coastal carved doors, Lamu's nautical history and the tribes that used to occupy this part of the coast in pre-Muslim days.

A beautifully restored traditional **Swahili house** tucked away off to the side of Yumbe House hotel will put you firmly back in the past. Inside you'll find a re-creation of a working Swahili home, with cookware, beds and other furniture.

The bulky, atmospheric **Lamu Fort** squats on Lamu's main square among the airy Swahili roofs. The highlight is scaling the ramparts for some sweeping town views.

Festivals & Events

The **Maulid Festival** celebrates the birth of the Prophet Mohammed with much singing, dancing and other events.

The **Lamu Cultural Festival** is another colourful cultural event, held in the last week of August, though it's aimed more at tourists than local people.

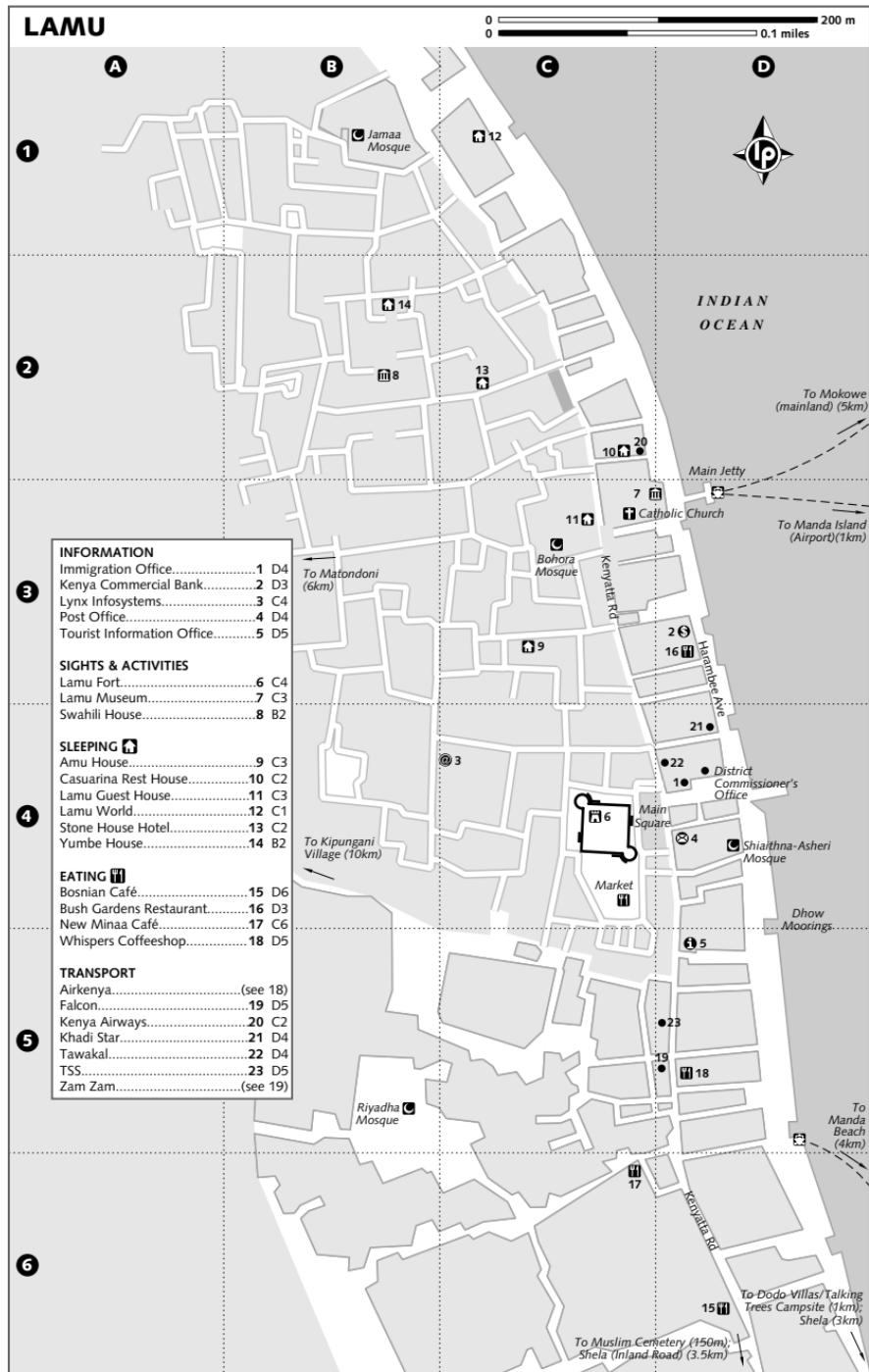
Sleeping

Casuarina Rest House (✉ 633123; s/d with bathroom KSh400/800, s/d/tr without bathroom KSh300/500/700) A friendly, personal vibe ensures that this place is often full. The roof terrace acts as a social lounge, the staff are great fun and the breezy top-floor balcony double is fantastic.

Lamu Guest House (✉ 633338; Kenyatta Rd; s/d with bathroom KSh500/1000, s/d/tr without bathroom KSh450/900/1000) The basic rooms are plain, but the upper-floor ones catch the sea breeze.

Amu House (✉ 633420; amuhouse@aol.com; s/d/tr KSh1700/2300/2700) Rates at this beautiful 16th-century house include breakfast, transfers from the airstrip and a free water-skiing lesson at Shela Beach.

Yumbe House (✉ 633101; lamuoldtown@africaonline.co.ke; s/d/tr KSh1300/2800/3900) A tall, traditional house set around a leafy courtyard. The pleasant rooms have fridges and are spotlessly clean, decked out with woven rugs and Lamu furniture.



Stone House Hotel (✉ 633544; half-board s/d US\$45/66) Another wonderful old Swahili place with excellent views over the town and waterfront from its superb rooftop restaurant (no alcohol). Rooms can be booked with Kisiwani Ltd (✉ 020-4446384) in Nairobi.

Lamu World (✉ 633491; www.lamuworld.com; Harambee Ave; s/d/ste US\$150/200/250; ⚡) An almost perfect modern interpretation of Swahili style. Its 10 rooms are shared between two houses, all with immaculate fittings.

Eating

All the cheap places and many of the more expensive restaurants are closed all day until after sunset during the month of Ramadan.

New Minaa Café (meals under KSh120; ⚡ 6.30am-midnight) This busy rooftop café serves Swahili favourites, like kebabs, *maharagwe* (beans in coconut milk) and *samaki* (fried fish).

Bush Gardens Restaurant (✉ 633285; Harambee Ave; mains KSh180-800) The template for a whole set of restaurants along the waterfront, offering breakfasts, excellent seafood, lobster in Swahili sauce, and superb juices and shakes.

Whispers Coffeeshop (Kenyatta Rd; mains KSh240-550; ⚡ 9am-9pm) This is a great place for an upmarket meal, a freshly baked cake or a real cappuccino, even during Ramadan (although it closes in the low season).

Bosnian Café (Kenyatta Rd) One of several dirt-cheap local canteens at the far end of the main street that set up takeaway stalls in the evening, selling samosas, chapatis, *mishkaki* (kebabs), chips and the like.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Airkenya (✉ 633445; Baraka House, Kenyatta Rd) and **Safarilink** (✉ Nairobi 020-600777) fly between Lamu and Nairobi's Wilson Airport daily (US\$145, 1½ hours). **Kenya Airways** (✉ 633155; Casuarina House, Harambee Ave) has daily afternoon flights between Lamu and Nairobi's Kenyatta International Airport (KSh10,860, 2½ hours). **Mombasa Air Safari** (✉ Mombasa 041-433061) flies to Mombasa (US\$90, 1½ hours) via Malindi (US\$21, 30 minutes).

Lamu's airport is on Manda Island and the ferry across the channel to Lamu costs KSh100.

BUS

The main bus companies operating between Mombasa, Malindi and Lamu are TSS, Falcon, Zam Zam, Khadi Star and Tawakal.

There are booking offices for all these companies on Kenyatta Rd, apart from Khadi Star, which has its office on the waterfront. The going rate to Mombasa is KSh400 to KSh500; most buses leave between 7am and 8am, so you'll need to be at the jetty at 6.30am for the boat to the mainland. Book early as demand is heavy.

Getting Around

There are ferries (KSh40) between Lamu and the bus station on the mainland (near Mokowe). Ferries between the airstrip on Manda Island and Lamu cost KSh100 and leave about half an hour before the flights leave.

SHELA

This ancient Swahili village on Lamu island is an atmospheric place to wander around, although most people come here for the spectacular dune-backed beach.

Dodo Villas/Talking Trees Campsite (✉ 633500; camp sites per tent KSh400, r KSh600-1200, apt per person KSh200) is Lamu's only budget beach option, 50m back from the seafront on the Shela-Lamu track. The **Stopover Guest House** (✉ 633459; mtendeni@kenya.com; incl breakfast KSh3000) is the first place you come to on the waterfront and has nice rooms with big beds.

Island Hotel (✉ 633290; half-board s/d US\$37/52) is a superb Lamu-style house in the centre of Shela with a romantic rooftop restaurant. It's five minutes' walk from the waterfront, along the alley beside Kijani House. **Peponi Hotel** (✉ 633421; www.peponi-lamu.com; s/d US\$220/300; ⚡ closed May & Jun; ⚡), at the east end of Shela, is the top resort hotel on the island. It overlooks the Lamu Channel and there are just 24 individually styled rooms.

To get to Shela, you can take a motorised dhow from the moorings in Lamu for KSh100 per person (or KSh250 to KSh300 for a solo ride). Walking takes about 40 minutes.

SOUTHERN KENYA

TSAVO NATIONAL PARK

At nearly 22,000 sq km, Tsavo is the largest national park in Kenya and divided into Tsavo West National Park (9000 sq km) and Tsavo East National Park (11,747 sq km). Its landscapes are some of the most dramatic in Kenya, the animals are that bit wilder and the parks receive comparatively few visitors.

Entry is US\$27/10 per adult/child per day, vehicles cost KSh200 and camping is US\$10 per adult; you have to pay separately for each park. Both use the smartcard system; you'll need enough credit for your vehicle, entry fee and any camping charges for as long as you're staying. Smartcards can be bought and recharged at the Voi Gate to Tsavo East or in Mombasa (p702).

Campers in Tsavo West National Park can use the **public camp sites** (camp sites adult/child US\$10/5) at Komboyo and Chyulu, or a choice of **special camp sites** (camp sites adult/child US\$15/5).

Ngulia Safari Camp (✉ Voi 043-30050; tsavoh@africaonline.co.ke; r KSh3500-6000) has new management and a complete renovation has turned this hillside camp into Tsavo's best luxury bargain. Thatched tent-fronted stone cottages come with or without kitchen, and there's a small bar-restaurant.

At Tsavo East, **Ndololo Camp** (✉ 043-30050; tsavoh@africaonline.co.ke; full board s/d/tr US\$40/70/90) is a great-value tented camp with mosquito nets, and canvas toilet and shower cubicles. There's a single **KWS camp site** (✉ 043-30049; tenpi@africaonline.co.ke; camp sites adult/child US\$10/5) with basic toilets, and a few **special camp sites** (adult/child US\$15/5) that move from year to year.

Just 4km from Voi Gate, **Voi Safari Lodge** (✉ Mombasa 041-471861; voilodge@kenya-safari.co.ke; s/d US\$105/150; ) overlooks an incredible sweep of savannah, and has a rock-cut swimming pool and a natural waterhole.

Access to either part of Tsavo National Park is by private vehicle (preferably 4WD) or organised safari from Nairobi or Mombasa.

AMBOSELI NATIONAL PARK

The most popular park in Kenya after the Masai Mara is **Amboseli** (✉ 045-622251; adult/child US\$30/10, smartcard required), mainly because elephants grazing with a backdrop of Mt Kilimanjaro make what is probably the definitive Kenyan wildlife shot.

Tortilis Camp (✉ 020-604053; www.chelipeacock.com; full board s/d US\$400/640) is a wonderfully conceived site, and one of the most exclusive ecododges in Kenya, commanding a superb spot with perfect Kilimanjaro vistas. Prices include transfers, guided walks, cultural visits, laundry and most drinks, but not park fees or fancy wine. **Ol Tukai Lodge** (✉ 020-4445514; oltukai@mitsuminet.com; full board s/d US\$200/280; ) is a splendid lodge with soaring *makuti* (thatched palm leaf) roofs and tranquil shaded gardens.

The split-level bar has wonderful views, and the overall atmosphere is of peace and luxury. Two of the cottages have wheelchair access.

The only way to see Amboseli is by private vehicle (preferably 4WD) or on an organised safari.

KENYA DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

In the national parks, high-season prices are normally from July to March; on the coast, peak times tend to be July to August and December to March. High-season prices are quoted here.

Bandas are basic huts and cottages, usually with some kind of kitchen and bathroom, that offer excellent value for budget travellers. Camping gear can be hired in Nairobi and around Mt Kenya, and there are basic KWS camp sites in just about every national park or reserve. The KWS 'special' camp sites are temporary sites with few facilities that cost more because of their wilder locations.

Budget hotels are often known as 'board and lodgings' and tend to be very run-down, with almost nonexistent security. 'Proper' hotels and guesthouses come in all shapes and sizes, from Kenyan, African and Western chains through boutique hotels to little family-run concerns. Standards of rooms, food and service are generally very good, especially at high-end establishments. Midrange self-catering options are available at some coastal resorts, but probably nowhere else in the country.

Most national parks have some fantastic safari lodges. The best places feature five-star rooms, *makuti*-roofed bars and restaurants overlooking waterholes full of wildlife. Rates tend to come down a lot in the low season.

For a real taste of East Africa, you must treat yourself to a couple of nights in a luxury tented camp. These places tend to occupy wonderfully remote settings, and feature large, comfortable, semi-permanent safari tents with beds, furniture and bathrooms.

ACTIVITIES

Ballooning

It's definitely worth saving up your shillings for the incomparable experience of watching wildlife while floating silently above the savannah plains in a hot-air balloon. Flights

PRACTICALITIES

- Major newspapers and magazines in Kenya include the *Daily Nation*, the *East African Standard*, the *East African*, the *Weekly Review* and the *New African*.
- KBC Radio broadcasts throughout the country on various FM frequencies. Most major towns also have their own local music and talkback stations, and the BBC World Service is easily accessible.
- KBC and NTV are the main national TV stations; the CNN, Sky and BBC networks are also widely available on satellite or cable (DSTV).
- Kenyan televisual equipment uses the standard European NSTC video system.
- Kenya uses the 240V system, with square three-pin sockets as used in the UK. Bring a universal adaptor if you need to charge your phone or run other appliances.
- Kenya uses the metric system; distances are in kilometres and most weights are in kilograms.

are currently available in the Masai Mara for around US\$390, and typically set off at dawn and end with a champagne breakfast.

Diving & Snorkelling

The Malindi Marine National Park (p704) offers opportunities for snorkelling and scuba diving. October to March is the best time; silt affects visibility during June, July and August. Almost every hotel and resort on the coast can arrange an open-water diving course. A five-day PADI certification course will cost US\$350 to US\$450. Trips for certified divers, including two dives, go for around US\$90.

Trekking & Climbing

For proper mountain trekking, Mt Kenya (p694) is the obvious choice, but there are plenty of other options, such as Mt Elgon, the Cherangani Hills, the upper reaches of the Aberdares (p697) and even the Ngong Hills, close to Nairobi.

For more trekking information, get hold of a copy of Lonely Planet's *Trekking in East Africa* or contact the **Mountain Club of Kenya** (MCK; ☎ 020-602330; www.mck.or.ke).

Savage Wilderness Safaris (☎ 020-521590; www.whitewaterkenya.com; Sarit Centre, PO Box 1000, Westlands, Nairobi) offers mountaineering trips to Mt Kenya and rock climbing at sites around the country, as well as some more unusual options, like caving.

Wildlife Safaris

Kenya is one of the greatest wildlife-watching destinations on earth and virtually every visitor to Kenya goes on safari at least once. There are dozens of safari operators to choose from

and it's worth spending some time to select a reliable one that matches your budget and itinerary. Beware that fly-by-night operations exist and several 'budget' companies promise less than they deliver for your money. It's worth checking with the **Kenyan Association of Tour Operators** (KATO; ☎ 020-713348; www.katokenya.org) before making a booking; KATO membership is at least some indicator of reliability and using a KATO member will give you some recourse if things go awry. We can personally recommend the following companies, but this list is by no means exhaustive.

Ben's Ecological Safaris (Map pp686–7; ☎ 020-3755290; www.bensecologicalsafaris.com; Aqua Plaza, Muranga Rd, Nairobi) A professionally run local outfit that puts together excellent wildlife- and bird-watching itineraries.

Bike Treks (☎ 020-446371; www.biketreks.co.ke; Kabete Gardens, Westlands, Nairobi) Walking and cycling safaris to major sites such as the Masai Mara, Mt Kenya etc.

Gametrackers (Map pp688–9; ☎ 020-338927; www.gametrackersafaris.com; Ngonyi Towers, cnr Koinange & Moktar Daddah Sts, Nairobi) Offers competitively priced safaris to Lake Turkana as well as less far-flung destinations.

Origins Safaris (Map pp688–9; ☎ 020-312137; www.originsafaris.info; Fedha Towers, Standard St, Nairobi) Tailor-made wildlife, birding and cultural safaris for medium- to top-end customers.

Sirikwa Safaris (☎ 0733-793524; Kitale) Can organise treks in little-visited parts of western Kenya, as well as expert local wildlife knowledge.

BUSINESS HOURS

Most government offices are open Monday to Friday from 8am or 8.30am to 1pm and from 2pm to 5pm. Post offices, shops and services open roughly from 8am to 5pm Monday to

Friday and 9am to noon on Saturday. Internet cafés generally keep longer evening hours and may open on Sunday. Banking hours are from 9am to 3pm Monday to Friday and from 9am to 11am Saturday.

As a rule cafés will open at around 6am or 7am and close in the early evening, while more expensive ethnic restaurants will be open from 11am to 10pm daily, sometimes with a break between lunch and dinner.

CUSTOMS

There are strict laws about taking wildlife products out of Kenya. The export of products made from elephant, rhino and sea turtle are prohibited. The collection of coral is also not allowed. Ostrich eggs will be confiscated unless you can prove you bought them from a certified ostrich farm. Always check to see what permits are required, especially for the export of any plants, insects and shells.

The usual regulations apply to items you can bring into the country: 50 cigars, 200 cigarettes, 250g of pipe tobacco, 1L of alcohol, 250ml of perfume, and other personal items, such as cameras, laptop computers and binoculars. Obscene publications are banned, which may extend to some lads' magazines.

You are allowed to take up to KSh100,000 out of the country.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

A little street sense goes a long way here, and getting the latest local information is essential wherever you intend to travel.

Banditry

Wars in Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia have all affected stability and safety in northern and northeastern Kenya. However, tourists are rarely targeted and security has also improved considerably in previously high-risk areas, such as the Isiolo–Marsabit, Marsabit–Moyale and Malindi–Lamu routes. You should always check the situation locally before taking these roads, or travelling between Garsen and Garissa or Thika.

Crime

The country's biggest problem is crime, ranging from petty snatch theft and mugging to violent armed robbery, carjacking and corruption. As a visitor you needn't feel paranoid, but you should always keep your wits about you, particularly at night.

Perhaps the best advice for when you're walking around cities and towns is not to carry anything valuable with you. Most hotels provide a safe or secure place for valuables, although you should be cautious of the security at some budget places.

Always take taxis after dark or along lonely dirt roads. In the event of a crime, you'll need to get a police report if you intend to make an insurance claim.

Scams

At some point in Kenya you'll almost certainly come across people who play on the emotions and gullibility of foreigners. Nairobi is a particular hot spot, with 'friendly' approaches a daily, if not hourly, occurrence. You should always ignore any requests for money. Be sceptical of strangers who claim to recognise you in the street, and anyone who makes a big show of inviting you into the hospitality of their home probably has ulterior motives. The usual trick is to bestow some kind of gift upon the delighted traveller, who is then emotionally blackmailed into reciprocating to the order of several hundred shillings.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Kenyan Embassies & Consulates

Australia (✉ 02-6247 4788; kenrep@dynamite.com.au; QBE Bldg, 33–35 Ainslie Ave, Canberra, ACT 2601)

Canada (✉ 613-563 1773; www.kenyahighcommission.ca; 415 Laurier Ave, East Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 6R4)

South Africa (✉ 012-362 2249; kenp@pta.lia.net; 302 Brooks St, Menlo Park, 0081 Pretoria)

Tanzania (✉ 022-2112955; khc@raha.com; NIC Investment House, Samora Ave, Dar es Salaam)

Uganda (✉ 041-258235; Plot No 41, Nakasero Rd, Kampala)

UK (✉ 020-7636 2371; www.kenyahighcommission.com; 45 Portland Pl, London W1N 4AS)

USA (✉ 202-387-6101; www.kenyaembassy.com; 2249 R Street NW, Washington DC 20008)

Embassies & Consulates in Kenya

A selection of countries that maintain diplomatic missions in Kenya are listed below.

Australia (Map pp686–7; ✉ 020-445034; www.embassy.gov.au/ke.html; ICIPE House, Riverside Dr, Nairobi)

Canada (✉ 020-3663000; www.nairobi.gc.ca; Limuru Rd, Nairobi)

Ethiopia (Map pp686–7; ✉ 020-2732050; State House Ave, Nairobi)

French (Map pp686–7; ✉ 020-316363; www.ambafrance-ke.org; Barclays Plaza, Loita St, Nairobi)

Germany (☎ 020-4262100; www.nairobi.diplo.de; 113 Riverside Dr, Nairobi)

Netherlands (☎ 020-444 7412; Riverside La, Nairobi)

South Africa (☎ 020-282 7100; Roshanmaer Pl, Lenana Rd, Nairobi)

Sudan (Map pp686-7; ☎ 020-2720883; sudanemb@wananchi.com; AON-Minet Bldg, Mamlaka Rd, Nairobi) At the time of research, this embassy did not issue visas.

Tanzania (Map pp688-9; ☎ 020-311948; Reinsurance Plaza, Aga Khan Walk, Nairobi)

Uganda Kenyatta Ave (Map pp688-9; ☎ 020-311814; Uganda House, Kenyatta Ave, Nairobi); Riverside Paddocks (☎ 020-4445420; www.ugandahighcommission.co.ke; Riverside Paddocks, Nairobi)

UK (Map pp686-7; ☎ 020-2844000; www.britishhighcommission.gov.uk/kenya; Upper Hill Rd, Nairobi)

USA (☎ 020-3636000; <http://nairobi.usembassy.gov>; United Nations Ave, Nairobi)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The major events around Kenya include the following:

Maulid Festival Falling in March or April for the next few years, this annual celebration of the prophet Mohammed's birthday is a huge event in Lamu town.

Tusker Safari Sevens (www.safarisevent.com) International rugby tournament held every June near Nairobi.

Kenya Music Festival (☎ 020-2712964) The country's longest-running music festival, held over 10 days in August in Nairobi.

Mombasa Carnival (zainab@africaonline.co.ke) November street festival, with music, dance and other events.

East Africa Safari Rally (www.eastafricansafarirally.com) Classic car rally now in its 50th year, covering Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda using only pre-1971 vehicles. Held in December.

FOOD

You can eat well in Kenya, though outside the major towns variety isn't always a priority. In general you should be able to snack for under KSh100 on the street and fill up for under KSh200 in any cheap Kenyan cafeteria; an Indian or standard Western meal will cost around KSh500, a Chinese meal anything up to KSh1000, and a top-flight meal in a classy restaurant with wine and all the trimmings can easily exceed KSh2000 per person.

HOLIDAYS

Muslim festivals are significant events along the coast. Many places to eat in the region close until after sundown during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, which will run

from 13 September 2007 and 2 September 2008. The Maulid Festival, marking the birth of the Prophet Mohammed, is also widely celebrated, especially on Lamu. This will take place on 20 March 2007 and 20 March 2008.

Other public holidays in Kenya include the following:

New Year's Day 1 January

Good Friday and Easter Monday March/April

Labour Day 1 May

Madaraka (Self-Rule) Day 1 June

Moi Day 10 October

Kenyatta Day 20 October

Independence Day 12 December

Christmas Day 25 December

Boxing Day 26 December

INTERNET ACCESS

Most towns have at least one internet café (and Nairobi has lots) where you can surf and access webmail accounts or instant-messenger programs. Rates are cheapest in Nairobi and Mombasa (as little as KSh1 per minute), rising to up to KSh20 per minute in rural areas and top-end hotels.

The national Posta network offers internet access at almost every main post office in the country, charging the same fixed rate of KSh1.16 per minute.

MAPS

Bookshops, especially the larger ones in Nairobi, are the best places to look for maps in Kenya. The *Tourist Map of Kenya* gives good detail, as does the *Kenya Route Map*; both cost around KSh250.

The most detailed and thorough maps are published by the Survey of Kenya; many are out of print, but the better bookshops in Nairobi usually have copies of *Amboseli National Park* (SK 87), *Masai Mara Game Reserve* (SK 86), *Tsavo East National Park* (SK 82) and *Tsavo West National Park* (SK 78).

MONEY

The unit of currency is the Kenyan shilling (KSh), which is made up of 100 cents. Notes in circulation are KSh1000, 500, 200, 100, 50 and 20, and there are also new coins of KSh40, 20, 10, 5 and 1 in circulation.

The euro, US dollar and British pound are all easy to change throughout the country. Cash is easy and quick to exchange at banks and foreign-exchange bureaus; travellers

cheques are not as widely accepted and often carry high commission charges.

ATMs

Virtually all banks in Kenya have ATMs at most branches. Barclays Bank has the most reliable ATMs for international withdrawals, with ATMs in most major Kenyan towns supporting MasterCard, Visa, Plus and Cirrus international networks.

Standard Chartered and Kenya Commercial Bank ATMs also accept Visa but not the other major providers, and are more likely to decline transactions.

Credit Cards

Credit cards are becoming increasingly popular, although connections fail with tedious regularity. Visa and MasterCard are now widely accepted, but it would be prudent to stick to upmarket hotels, restaurants and shopping centres to use them.

Moneychangers

The best places to change money are foreign-exchange bureaus, which can be found everywhere and usually don't charge commission. Watch out for differing small bill (US\$10) and large bill (US\$100) rates; the larger bills usually get the better rates.

Banks also change money, but they charge large commissions and there's a fee per travellers cheque, so you're better off carrying larger denominations. Amex has offices in Mombasa and Nairobi, where you can buy and sell Amex travellers cheques.

Tipping

Tipping is not common practice among Kenyans, but there's no harm in rounding up the bill by a few shillings if you're pleased with the service in a cheap restaurant. In tourist-oriented businesses a service charge of 10% is often added to the bill, along with the 16% VAT and 2% catering levy. Most tourist guides and all safari drivers and cooks will expect some kind of gratuity at the end of your tour or trip. As fares are negotiated in advance, taxi drivers do not need to be tipped unless they provide exceptional service.

POST

The Kenyan postal system is run by the government Postal Corporation of Kenya, now rebranded as the dynamic-sounding Posta.

Letters sent from Kenya rarely go astray, but can take up to two weeks to reach Australia or the USA. Incoming letters to Kenya can be sent care of poste restante to any town. Make sure your correspondents write your name in block capitals and also underline the surname. They take anywhere from four days to a week to reach the poste-restante service in Nairobi.

TELEPHONE

The Kenyan fixed-line phone system, run by **Telkom Kenya** (www.telkom.co.ke), is more or less functional, but has been overtaken by the massive popularity of prepaid mobile phones.

International call rates from Kenya are relatively expensive, charged at a flat rate of US\$0.90 per minute during peak periods and US\$0.64 per minute off-peak to any destination. Operator-assisted calls are charged at the standard peak rate but are subject to a three-minute minimum. You can always dial direct using a phonecards.

Reverse-charge (collect) calls are possible, but only to countries that have set up free direct-dial numbers allowing you to reach the international operator in the country you are calling. Currently these include: the UK ([0800-220441](tel:0800-220441)), the USA ([0800-111, 0800-1112](tel:0800-111,0800-1112)), Canada ([0800-220114, 0800-220115](tel:0800-220114,0800-220115)), New Zealand ([0800-220641](tel:0800-220641)) and Switzerland ([0800-220411](tel:0800-220411)).

The minimum charge for a local call from a payphone is KSh5 for 97 seconds, while long-distance rates vary depending on the distance.

Mobile Phones

An estimated 80% of all calls here are now made on mobile phones, and coverage is good in all but the most rural areas. Kenya uses the GSM 900 system, which is compatible with Europe and Australia but not with the North American GSM 1900 system.

If your phone isn't locked into a network, you can pick up a prepaid starter pack from one of the Kenyan mobile-phone companies; the main players are **Safaricom** (www.safaricom.co.ke) and **Celtel** (www.ke.celtel.com). A SIM card will cost about KSh100, and you can then buy top-up 'scratchcards' from shops and booths across the country. An international SMS costs around KSh10, and voice charges vary according to tariff, time and destination of call.

Mobile-phone numbers have a four-digit prefix beginning with 07.

Phonecards

With the new Telkom Kenya phonecards, any phone can now be used for prepaid calls – you just have to dial the access number (✉ 0844), and enter in the number and passcode on the card. There are booths selling the cards all over the country. Cards come in denominations of KSh200, KSh500, KSh1000 and KSh2000, and call charges are slightly more expensive than for standard lines (peak/off-peak US\$1/0.70).

TIME

Time in Kenya is GMT/UTC plus three hours year-round. You should also be aware of the concept of 'Swahili time', which perversely is six hours out of kilter with the rest of the world. Noon and midnight are 6 o'clock (*saa sitta*) Swahili time, and 7am and 7pm are 1 o'clock (*saa moja*). Just add or subtract six hours from whatever time you are told; Swahili doesn't distinguish between am and pm.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Considering the extent to which the country relies on tourism, it's incredible that there is no tourist office in Nairobi. There are a handful of information offices elsewhere in the country, ranging from helpful private concerns to under-funded government offices; most can at least provide basic maps of the town, and brochures on local businesses and attractions.

VISAS

Visas are now required by almost all visitors to Kenya, including Europeans, Australians, New Zealanders, Americans and Canadians, although citizens from a few smaller Commonwealth countries are exempt. Visas are valid for three months from the date of entry and can be obtained on arrival at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi. The visa fee is UK£35 or US\$50 for a single-entry visa, and UK£70 or US\$100 for multiple entries. If you have any other currencies, you'll have to change them into Kenyan shillings.

Applications for Kenyan visas are simple and straightforward in Tanzania and Uganda, and payment is accepted in local currency. Visas can also be issued on arrival at the land borders with Uganda and Tanzania.

Visa Extensions

Tourist visas can be extended for a further three-month period, but seven-day transit visas (US\$20) cannot. You can extend your visa at the **immigration office** (✉ 311745; Uhuru ni Kari Bldg, Mama Ngina Dr) in Mombasa.

Visas for Onward Travel

Since Nairobi is a common gateway city to East Africa and the city centre is easy to get around, many travellers spend some time here picking up visas for other countries that they intend to visit. If you are going to do this, you need to plan ahead of time and call the embassy to confirm the hours that visa applications are received (these change frequently in Nairobi). Most embassies will want you to pay visa fees in US dollars (see p710 for contact details).

Just because a country has an embassy or consulate here, it doesn't necessarily mean you can get that country's visa. The borders with Somalia and Sudan are both closed, so you'll have to go to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia if you want a Sudanese visa, and Somali visas are unlikely to be available for the foreseeable future.

For Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda, three-month visas are readily available in Nairobi and cost US\$50 for most nationalities. Two passport photos are required for applications and visas can usually be issued the same day.

TRANSPORT IN KENYA

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Most international flights to/from Nairobi are handled by **Jomo Kenyatta International Airport** (NBO; ✉ 020-825400; www.kenyaairports.co.ke), 15km southeast of the city. It's a well-organised place, with two international terminals, a smaller domestic terminal, plenty of duty-free and souvenir shops, internet access and a branch of Java Coffee.

Some flights between Nairobi and Kilimanjaro International Airport or Mwanza in Tanzania, as well as many domestic flights, use **Wilson Airport** (WIL; ✉ 020-501941), which is about 6km south of the city centre on Langata Rd. Mombasa's **Moi International Airport** (MBA; ✉ 041-433211) handles flights to Zanzibar, but otherwise is mainly used by charter airlines and domestic flights.

Kenya Airways is the main national and regional carrier, and has a generally good safety record. There are good connections from Nairobi to most regions of Africa.

The following airlines fly to and from Kenya, and have offices in Nairobi except where otherwise indicated:

Air India (airline code AI; Map pp688-9; ☎ 020-340925; www.airindia.com) Hub: Mumbai.

Air Malawi (airline code QM; ☎ 020-240965; www.airmalawi.net) Hub: Lilongwe.

Air Zimbabwe (airline code UM; ☎ 020-339522; www.airzim.co.zw) Hub: Harare.

Airkenya (airline code QP; ☎ 020-605745; www.airkenya.com) Hub: Wilson Airport, Nairobi. Kilimanjaro only.

British Airways (airline code BA; Map pp688-9; ☎ 020-244430; www.british-airways.com) Hub: Heathrow Airport, London.

Daallo Airlines (airline code D3; ☎ 020-317318; www.daallo.com) Hub: Hargeisa.

Egypt Air (airline code MS; Map pp688-9; ☎ 020-226821; www.egyptair.com.eg) Hub: Cairo.

Emirates (airline code EK; Map pp686-7; ☎ 020-211187; www.emirates.com) Hub: Dubai.

Ethiopian Airlines (airline code ET; Map pp688-9; ☎ 020-330837; www.ethiopianairlines.com) Hub: Addis Ababa.

Gulf Air (airline code GF; ☎ 020-241123; www.gulfairco.com) Hub: Abu Dhabi.

Kenya Airways (airline code KQ; Map pp686-7; ☎ 020-32074100; www.kenya-airways.com) Hub: Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi. Also has an office in Mombasa.

KLM (airline code KL; Map pp686-7; ☎ 020-32074100; www.klm.com) Hub: Amsterdam.

Oman Air (airline code WY; Map p701; ☎ 041-221444; www.oman-air.com) Hub: Muscat. Office in Mombasa.

Precision Air (airline code PW; ☎ 020-602561; www.precisionairtz.com) Hub: Dar es Salaam.

Rwandair (airline code WB; ☎ 0733-740703; www.rwandair.com) Hub: Kigali.

Safarilink Aviation (☎ 020-600777; www.safarilink.co.ke) Hub: Wilson Airport, Nairobi. Kilimanjaro only.

SN Brussels Airlines (airline code SN; ☎ 020-4443070; www.flysn.com) Hub: Brussels.

South African Airways (airline code SA; ☎ 020-229663; www.saakenya.com) Hub: Johannesburg.

Swiss International Airlines (airline code SR; ☎ 020-3744045; www.swiss.com) Hub: Zurich.

Land

ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia currently offers the only viable overland route into Kenya from the north, but owing to security concerns, check the latest

situation carefully before attempting this crossing.

From immigration on the Ethiopian side of town it's a 2km walk to the Ethiopian and Kenyan customs posts. Be aware that a yellow-fever vaccination is required to cross either border at Moyale. A cholera vaccination may also be required.

Buses or trucks connect the border to Marsabit (KSh600, 8½ hours) and Isiolo (KSh1200, 17 hours) along a bone-jarring dirt road.

TANZANIA

The main land borders between Kenya and Tanzania are at Namanga, Taveta, Isebania and Lunga Lunga, and can be reached by public transport.

Main bus companies serving Tanzania include the following:

Akamba (☎ 020-340430; akamba_prs@skyweb.co.ke; Nairobi) Daily buses between Mwanza and Nairobi (12 to 14 hours).

Davanu Shuttle (☎ 057-8142; Arusha) Arusha/Moshi shuttle buses.

Easy Coach (☎ 020-210711; easycoach@wananchi.com; Nairobi)

Riverside Shuttle Nairobi (☎ 020-229618); Arusha (☎ 057-2639) Arusha/Moshi shuttle buses.

Scandinavia Express (☎ 020-247131; Nairobi) Daily buses between Dar es Salaam and Mombasa (10 hours), between Dar es Salaam and Nairobi via Arusha (13 hours), between Mwanza and Nairobi (12 to 14 hours) and between Tanga and Mombasa (four to five hours).

UGANDA

Numerous bus companies run between Nairobi and Kampala, or you can do the journey in stages via Malaba, or Busia if you are travelling via Kisumu.

Main bus companies serving Uganda include the following:

Akamba (☎ 020-340430; akamba_prs@skyweb.co.ke)

Falcon (☎ 020-229692)

Scandinavia Express (☎ 020-247131)

GETTING AROUND

Air

Four domestic operators, including the national carrier Kenya Airways, run scheduled flights within Kenya. Destinations served are predominantly around the coast and the popular southern national parks.

Book well in advance (essential during the tourist high season) with all these airlines. You should also remember to reconfirm return

flights 72 hours before departure, especially when connecting with an international flight.

Airlines flying domestically:

Air Kenya (✉ 020-605745; www.airkenya.com)

Amboseli, Lamu, Masai Mara, Malindi, Nanyuki.

Kenya Airways (✉ 020-3274100; www.kenya-airways.com) Kisumu, Lamu, Malindi, Mombasa.

Mombasa Air Safari (✉ 041-433061; www.mombasaairsafari.com) Amboseli, Lamu, Malindi, Masai Mara, Mombasa, Tsavo.

Safarilink (✉ 020-600777; www.safarilink.co.ke) Amboseli, Lamu, Masai Mara, Naivasha, Nanyuki, Tsavo West.

Bus

Kenya has an extensive network of long- and short-haul bus routes, with good coverage of the areas around Nairobi, the coast and the western regions. Buses offer varying levels of comfort, convenience and roadworthiness, but as a rule services are frequent, fast and often quite comfortable. The downside is the often diabolical condition of Kenya's road.

Car & Motorcycle

There are numerous car-hire companies who can hire you anything from a small hatchback to Toyota Land Cruiser 4WDs, although hire rates are some of the highest in the world.

An International Driving Permit (IDP) is not necessary in Kenya, but can be useful.

HIRE

Hiring a vehicle to tour Kenya (or at least the national parks) is an expensive way of seeing the country, but it does give you freedom of movement and is sometimes the only way of getting to remote areas.

A minimum age of between 23 and 25 years usually applies for hirers. Some companies prefer a licence with no endorsements or criminal convictions, and most require you to have been driving for at least two years. You will also need acceptable ID, such as a passport.

All the international companies have airport and/or town offices in Nairobi and Mombasa. Most safari companies will also hire out their vehicles, though you have few of the guarantees that you would with the companies listed here. **Let's Go Travel** (✉ 020-340331; www.letsgosafari.com) organises reliable car hire at favourable rates through partner firms.

Local and international hire companies:

Avenue Car Hire (✉ 020-313207; www.avenuecarhire.com) Nairobi.

Avis (✉ 020-316061; www.avis.co.ke) Mombasa and Nairobi.

Budget (✉ 020-223581; www.budget-kenya.com) Nairobi.

Central Rent-a-Car (✉ 020-222888; www.carhirekenya.com) Nairobi.

Glory Car Hire (✉ 020-225024; www.glorycarhire.com) Mombasa and Nairobi.

ROAD RULES

Driving practices in Kenya are some of the worst in the world and all are carried out at break-neck speed. Kenyans habitually drive on the wrong side of the road in order to avoid potholes or animals – flashing your lights at these vehicles should be enough to persuade the driver to get back into their own lanes. Never drive at night unless you absolutely have to, as very few cars have adequate headlights and the roads are full of pedestrians and cyclists.

Hitching

Hitchhiking is never entirely safe in any country in the world, and we don't recommend it. Travellers who decide to hitch should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk; it's safer to travel in pairs and let someone know where you are planning to go.

Local Transport

MATATU

Local *matatus* are the main means of getting around for local people, and any reasonably sized city or town will have plenty of services covering every major road and suburb. Fares start at KSh10 and may reach KSh40 for longer routes in Nairobi.

Matatus now comply with new safety laws, and must be fitted with seatbelts and 80kph speed governors; conductors and drivers must wear clearly identifiable red shirts, route numbers must be displayed and a 14-person capacity applies to vehicles that used to cram in as many as 30 people. Frequent police checks have also been brought in to enforce the rules.

Matatus leave when full and the fares are fixed. Wherever you're going, remember that most *matatu* crashes are head-on collisions – under no circumstances should you sit in the 'death seat' next to the *matatu* driver. Play it safe and sit in the middle seats away from the window.

SHARED TAXI (PEUGEOT)

Shared Peugeot taxis make a good alternative to *matatus*, though they're not subject to the same regulations. Peugeots are quicker than *matatus* and so are slightly more expensive, but they also are commonly involved in horrific smashes. Many companies have offices around the Accra, Cross and River Rds area in Nairobi.

TAXI

You'll find taxis on virtually every corner in the larger cities, especially in Nairobi and Mombasa, where taking a taxi at night is virtually mandatory. Fares are invariably negotiable and start at around KSh200 for short journeys.

Train

The Uganda Railway services two main routes, Nairobi–Kisumu and Nairobi–Mombasa. Both are night services of around 13 hours, but considerably more comfortable and significantly safer than travelling by road.

CLASSES

There are three classes on Kenyan trains, but only 1st and 2nd class can be recommended. Note that passengers are divided

up by gender. No compartment can be locked from the outside, so remember not to leave any valuables lying around if you leave it for any reason. You might want to padlock your rucksack to something during dinner and breakfast. Always lock your compartment from the inside before you go to sleep. Third class has seats only, and security can be a real problem.

COSTS

The downside to train travel is the price, over KSh3000 for 1st class on the Nairobi–Mombasa route, including meals (dinner and breakfast) and bedding. The Kisumu route is much less fancy, and 1st-class tickets cost around KSh1500.

RESERVATIONS

You must book in advance for both 1st and 2nd class, otherwise you'll probably find there are no berths available; two to three days is usually sufficient. Visa credit cards are accepted for railway bookings. Compartment and berth numbers are posted up about 30 minutes prior to departure.

There are **booking offices** (Mombasa ☎ 041-312220; Nairobi ☎ 020-221211) in major cities and at Kisumu train station.

